A GENERAL

REPRESENTATION

OF

Reveal'd Religion:

IN WHICH

The Chief Prejudices that have been entertain'd againſt it, are examin'd;

AND

The Practical End propos'd by it, recommended, and reſcued from Unfaithful Evaſions.

By *THO. RYMER*, Late Fellow of *Queen's*-College in *Cambridge*; and Chaplain to the Right Reverend Father in God, THOMAS Lord Biſhop of *NORWICH.*

Φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ Σωφρονεῖν. Rom. 12. 3.

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TO THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

THOMAS

Lord Biſhop of *Norwich*.

My LORD,



THIS ſmall Performance humbly hopes to be accepted by your Lordſhip for the Sake of its Subject, and the Sincerity of its Author. And this Addreſs

dreſs is directed to you, for the Sake of paying my Duty, as well as begging your Protection: But ſince the Cuſtom of the World has made ſuch Applications paſs for Gratitude, I have no Reaſon to decline that Advantage; for I know not how I could otherwiſe expreſs mine to your Lordſhip.

You could not be ſurprized to hear in general, that ſuch an Application was deſign'd from a Dioceſe, which ſo long and ſo lately enjoy'd you as Archdeacon; a Dioceſe, in which if you have left any Enemies, they were made ſo only by your Zeal for the Publick, and for the Beſt of Kings, not only ſince, but before it was in His Power to reward it; a Zeal that is always the more provoking, the greater the Prudence is that conducts it; becauſe it is ſo much the more likely to ſucceed. Had there been no other Pretence for it but that Relation to you, That might

might have been a better Title than what ſupports many a ſpacious Dedication; and I depend on it, your Kindneſs has entertained a better Opinion of the Author, than to be in much Pain for fear of the uſual Spirit of ſuch Addreſſes: Were it only for my own Sake, I would not chuſe to appear ſo great a Stranger to your Lordſhip, as to attempt to pleaſe by a fulſome Panegyrick. The uſual Conduct of Dedicators, tho' modeſt ones, is what I cannot account for: They pretend to be paying off many old Obligations; I acknowledge with Pleaſure I am contracting new ones. They make it their Buſineſs to give a Luſtre to the Names of their Patrons; 'tis my Ambition by your's to leſſen the Obſcurity of my own. They undertake as a Compenſation for all paſt Favours, to place a Picture of their Friends before their Works, and thereby to propagate and perpetuate

their Character: I do not preſume to imagine, that any one will look into this Book to whom your Lordſhip is a Stranger, nor can I entertain a Thought of its outliving your Lordſhip's Memory. I could take great Pleaſure in inſiſting upon the Particulars of ſuch a Subject, but after your Lordſhip has appeared to ſo great Advantage in ſo many Publick Characters, it would be mere Loquacity to inſiſt on private Virtues; ſhould I do it, there are few among the honeſt Countrymen of this Dioceſe, but would be apt to tell me, they knew all that before; ſo many are the Benefits they have received parochially from your Induſtry, Piety and Judgment; and the farther I look into the World, the leſs Occaſion I find for it. Your Lordſhip was happily placed as the Head of that Venerable Body, the Univerſity of *Cambridge*, at that tender Seaſon, when ſo great a Change was made

made in the Throne of theſe Kingdoms; and under your Influence and Conduct all Things proceeded in a dutiful and exemplary Manner; which may incline the World to impute whatever may ſince have appeared in a different Light, not to any Diſaffection in the whole Body, but to a different Conduct in a few active Men: And great Numbers that have been ſince removed and ſettled in all Parts of this Kingdom, who were then Eye-witneſſes of your prudent Zeal and Succeſs in the Diſcharge of that Character, ought to be ſuppoſed to do you Juſtice, and thereby to ſuperſede any thing that I can ſay. Since that, your Lordſhip has at once ſuſtain'd the Dignity and Importance of a Peer of *Great-Britain*, Biſhop of a large Dioceſe, and Paſtor of a moſt populous Pariſh; how worthily, there is no Room for me to ſay, his Majeſty has ſufficiently declared that by renewing your *Commendam*. And in

all these Characters, it must have been generally observed, that an Affectionate Concern for His Majesty, the present Royal Family, and the Protestant Cause, upon which the Happiness of this Church and State does so entirely depend, has always distinguished it self among a Multitude of other good Qualities.

I therefore beg Leave to pay my personal Duty to your Lordship, and recommend my own Infirmities to your Indulgence, instead of presuming to recommend your Acccomplishments to the World.

I am,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's

Most Humble and most Obedient

Servant and Chaplain,

Thomas Rymer.



THE PREFACE.

SOME Preface *to a Book is now become ſo uſual, that it may look like Rudeneſs to intrude into the World without one: And the beſt Uſe I can make of the few Lines I propoſe for it, may be to ſhow the Reader, what was the firſt Thing in my Thoughts, when I form'd this Deſign. This may, probably, give ſome Light to the whole, and make the Relation and Dependance of the ſeveral Parts appear more diſtinct, than the Brevity I have been oblig'd to in it might otherwiſe leave them.*

This Point was, The Natural Neceſſity of Virtue, as perfective of Human Nature: And this immediately oblig'd me to ſupport it by another Principle, The Continuance of Virtuous or Vicious Habits in the Soul, when ſhe

ſhe removes out of this World into the other. My Thoughts upon theſe Subjects had been ſo far encouraged by a Gentleman of ſuch a Character, that if offering them now to the World ſeems to want any Excuſe, that will be ſufficient to all that knew him and his Character, when moſt Private; and as 'tis ſince become more Publick, this Juſtification is improv'd upon me; and the more He is known, the more Force there will continually be in this Excuſe. But a ſincere Endeavour to promote True Religion, can never want any. Whoever is willing to go through the Fatigue of ſuch an Undertaking, may reaſonably expect to be at leaſt excus'd, how ill ſoever he ſucceeds: And ſome good Hope of ſucceeding well, and actually promoting Real Piety and Virtue, (tho' but in ſome few Perſons) ſhould be a full Compenſation for the ſevereſt Reflections that others can make on him as an Author.

If what is here ſaid in the Second Part of this Book, concerning the Habits contracted by Human Minds, be true, the abſolute Neceſſity of Virtue muſt follow; and all the treacherous Expedients to ſilence Conſcience at preſent, and ſecure our Happineſs hereafter, will be reſign'd by ſome, at leaſt, that are convinc'd of it.

I ſhould

I ſhould have been glad to have been prevented by ſo good a Hand as Dr. Scot's; *but, tho' he mentions this Principle in a* Preface *to his* Chriſtian Life, *with great Satisfaction, he has not enter'd into the Proof of this Fundamental Point: He thought it, 'tis like, a plain Truth; and ſuch, I hope, it will appear to all that examine it: But too much Pains can't be taken to ſecure that, on which ſo much depends. And if this Principle be eſtabliſh'd, the Notion of Repentance, which is too common, will appear in all its Abſurdity; the true Uſe of Divine Inſtitutions will be recover'd, where 'twas before turn'd into Formality and falſe Dependances; and the Chriſtian Faith will no longer be thought a Grievance, or made a mere Profeſſion, or only a tacit Submiſſion to Publick Principles. The Goodneſs of God will ſhine bright in it, and engage Men to walk as Children of Light, as Perſons led by that Light to Heaven; not in a mere local Senſe, but as forming their Minds for it.*

Cou'd I hope for ſuch Influence from this Second Part, as this great Truth ought to have, I ſhould expect to ſee that Spirit of Cavilling at Revelation vaniſh: And they who felt this Conviction, and acknowledg'd the Neceſſity of Virtue to our future Happineſs, would, I believe, read the former Part again with much greater Satisfaction. There

are, I think, but two Ways of conſidering Revelation; and the Profeſſors of reveal'd Religion have divided accordingly: The one is, To conſider it as ſuperſeding Virtue, or ſubſtituting ſomething elſe in its Room; which is the Caſe of Solifidians, Antinomians, *and the treacherous Abuſes of Popery: I do not here reckon the ſtricteſt* Prædeſtinarians, *becauſe they declare againſt ſuch a Conſequence, tho' I can't my ſelf conceive how it can be avoided: The other is, To conſider it as aſſiſting Virtue, as building upon that natural Foundation a ſtrong and beautiful Fabrick. As I am my ſelf heartily convinc'd that this is the true State of all God's Revelations, all his Interpoſitions, all his Inſtitutions; that he has no other View in any Part of 'em but to aſſiſt his Creatures, in ſuch a Manner as may become his Nature, and his Character as Governor of the World, I was willing to enlarge my Task beyond my firſt Intention, for the Sake of laying before ſuch Readers as can't well do it for themſelves, one entire Repreſentation of the whole of Religion, in ſuch a Manner as ſeems to me moſt intelligible. And that the good End I propoſe may be leſs liable to be fruſtrated, I have in the Firſt Part examin'd the chief Prejudices that have been entertain'd againſt its Principles: And in the Second, endeavour'd to obviate thoſe Evaſi-*

ons

ons that too often defeat a competent Practice, and make the best Principles useless. If my having contracted Things into this Compass for the Sake of this entire View, shall occasion any Mistakes of Moment, I hope I may find some proper Opportunity to set 'em right. One Map of the whole Earth that may be view'd at once, best answers many general Ends; and tho' it can't be exact or distinct in all Particulars, they may be farther enquir'd into at Discretion.

Acryse *near* Canterbury,
May 30. 1723.

THE

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THE CONTENTS.

PART I.

CHAP. I.

THE Rational Method of laying the Foundation of a Religious Life, Page 4

CHAP. II.

Some Considerations concerning Revelation, and the Progress of it from the beginning of the World, p. 14

CHAP. III.

The distinct Parts of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the Oeconomy of Man's Redemption, p. 37

CHAP.

The CONTENTS.

CHAP. IV.

Prejudices againſt ſeveral Parts of Reveal'd Religion, conſider'd: Particularly concerning the Sufferings of Mankind for the Original Sin, p. 71

CHAP. V.

The unreaſonable Severity underſtood to be expreſs'd in the New Teſtament, againſt all that may, or ever have liv'd without a perſonal Faith in Chriſt, conſider'd, p. 88

CHAP. VI.

God no Reſpecter of Perſons: Or, The Inequality of his Diſpenſations to the ſeveral Ages, explain'd and juſtify'd, p. 134

CHAP. VII.

Eternal Puniſhments conſider'd and vindicated, p. 151

CHAP. VIII.

The Satisfaction of Chriſt ſtated and defended, p. 174

CHAP.

The CONTENTS.

CHAP. IX.

Conſiderations concerning the Holy Spirit; as to the Poſſibility and Manner of its Operation on human Minds; the Sin againſt it, and the Caſe of Reprobation, p. 208

CHAP. X.

Concerning Faith, and the Obligation of all to whom the Goſpel is made known, to believe the Doctrines of it, p. 239

CHAP. XI.

Concerning the Sacraments, and Publick Worſhip, p. 260

CHAP. XII.

The common Prejudice ariſing from the Number of Profeſſions, Infidels, and Scoffers, conſider'd, p. 299

PART II.

CHAP. I.

REligion recommended as promoting the Happineſs of this; 1. With reſpect to the Temper

it forms, as to external Things: 2. With respect to the Influence which the Reflections of our own Minds have on Life; the Influence of a good and bad Conscience, p. 325

CHAP. II.

The Constituent Parts of Religion, as they relate to God, to the rest of Mankind, and to our selves, tend to promote our present Happiness, p. 354

CHAP. III.

The Improvement of the Soul, the great Business of this Life, and necessary to the Happiness of the other, as Habits contracted here continue in the Soul, p. 385

CHAP. IV.

The Delusion of a Careless, Supine Temper, and the Difficulties in Forming a Spirit fit for Heaven, particularly with respect to Temptations: Their Nature, and Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness, apply'd, p. 423

CHAP. V.

The Allegiance and the Purity of the Heart absolutely necessary; in order to which, Conscience is explain'd, p. 464

The CONTENTS.

CHAP. VI.

Our Duty muſt be entire; 1. *With reſpect to Relapſes into a looſe way of Living.* 2. *With reſpect to its Impartiality: No one Vice conſiſtent with Salvation,* p. 478

CHAP. VII.

Several Evaſions by which Men decline their Duty, and depend on preventing the Conſequences of a wicked Life: God's Mercy, particularly on Repentance, p. 495

CHAP. VIII.

The Parables of the Labourer in the Vineyard, and the Prodigal Son, conſider'd: Together with the Caſe of the Thief on the Croſs, p. 528

CHAP. IX.

The great Reaſon we have to conform faithfully to the Deſign of God's Spiritual Providence, p. 545

CHAP. X.

An Exhortation to promote ſuch Conformity univerſally, by promoting, as we have Opportunities, univerſal Virtue. p. 562

Smaller

Smaller Faults, eſpecially in Pointing, are left to the Reader's Attention: He's deſir'd to correct what follows.

PAge 23. *line* 21. *r.* (as ſtrictly enjoin'd by the Law.)
P. 39. *l.* 33. *r.* Not apply'd to ſo great.
P. 29. *l.* 28. *r.* Important.
P. 43. *l.* 16. *for* the *r.* their.
P. 48. *l.* 30. *r.* ſuch as is peculiarly.
P. 50. *l.* 30. *dele* the Point after Verſe.
P. 52. *l.* 21. *r.* often?
P. 59. *l.* 24. *r.* the.
P. 96. *l.* 30. *r.* the.
P. 101. *l.* 4. *r.* the.
P. 113. *l.* 2. *for* Chriſt *r.* Jeſus.
Ibid. l. 18. *r.* the.
P. 114. *l.* 10. *r.* Only the.
P. 120. *l.* 18. *r.* convey'd by.
P. 147. *l.* 11. *dele* it.
P. 160. *l.* 8. *r.* their.
P. 176. *l.* 15. *r.* that He was Ever.
P. 178. *l.* ult. *r.* only rational.
P. 200. *l.* 3. *for* wou'd *r.* need.
P. 206. *l.* 20. *for* clear *r.* clean.
Ibid. l. 23. *r.* this Sinfulneſs univerſal.
P. 209. *l.* 30. *dele* ?
P. 216. *l.* 18. *dele* to.
P. 233. *l.* 10. *dele* the Point after uſeleſs.
P. 249. *l.* 3. *r.* St. *Paul.*
P. 253. *l.* ult. *add*, as they are in no Danger of miſſing it, ſo, *&c.*
P. 306. *l.* 7. *r.* vicious.
P. 311. *l.* 16. *add*, asking.
P. 313. *l.* 4. *add*, to be inſiſted on.
P. 315. *l.* 14. *r.* other.
P. 323. *l.* 18. *for* meer, *r.* mean.
Ibid. l. 20. *for* his, *r.* its.
P. 329. *l.* 29. *r.* qualify.
P. 332. *l.* 12. *r.* happy.
P. 334. *l.* 12. *dele* in.
P. 336. *l.* 30. *r.* unmanly.
P. 338. *l.* 5. *r.* Afflictions.
P. 345. *l.* 12. *r.* Companion.
P. 350. *l.* 17. *r.* Diſtraction.
P. 403. *l.* 7. *add*, and if ſo.
P. 404. *l.* 19. *dele* in.
P. 427. *l.* 21. *r.* reverſe.
P. 433. *l.* 28. *r.* willingly.
P. 474. *l.* 25. *for* may *r.* muſt.
P. 487. *l.* 14. *r.* by a plain.
P. 523. *l.* 27. *r.* of our Thoughts.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE Sincerity and Fidelity of Men, as to their Obedience under any ſort of Influence or Authority, will depend on the Evidence they apprehend of the Truth and Propriety, the Genuineneſs and Uſefulneſs of it. Where there remains any Uncertainty of theſe, the Allegiance and Duty of all its Subjects will be eaſily ſhaken, eaſily overrul'd by the Appearance of ſome Advantage in breaking it.

It will no doubt be the ſame thing, with reſpect to any Religious Inſtitution. They, who have only not oppos'd it, only com-

ply'd with it as an eſtabliſh'd Cuſtom, which they never gave themſelves the Trouble to examine; ſuch Perſons will probably diſpenſe with ſuch Parts of it, as they find put 'em to ſome ſenſible Inconvenience. Wou'd they ſettle their Minds in a rational Conviction, that would fix 'em in a real Concern for all Parts of Religion, as the certain Means to the moſt Important End. Rational Creatures muſt act upon ſome preſent Reaſons; if therefore religious ones are wanting, ſenſual and corrupt ones will prevail.

Conſidering therefore the State of Mankind, 'tis not ſtrange that there have in all Ages been Variety of Infidels. By whatever ſupernatural Evidence the fundamental Principle of Religion, the Being of God himſelf, had been confirm'd; and whatever Forms of Duty or religious Diſpenſations, that God might have been pleas'd to build on it; I can't doubt but the State of Infidelity had been much the ſame. From hence pro-
Luke vii. ceeded our Saviour's Complaint of the Unreaſonableneſs of his Enemies: No Method would ſatisfy 'em. If the Inſtrument of God's Religious Diſpenſations exerciſes an eminent Auſterity, as *John* did, it muſt firſt be repreſented more than Human; and the worſt of the two Accounts that remains, muſt be maliciouſly preferr'd; it muſt not be imputed to the ſupernatural Aſſiſtance of God, but he muſt be declar'd to *have a Devil.*

If

If another comes in the common Liberties of Nature, and uses the regular Sustenance of human Infirmities, as Christ chose to do; he's presently represented as a Debauchee, and his Authority vilify'd and cry'd down; his Life condemn'd as unworthy any Character from Heaven, any Communications from God.

'Tis obvious to observe in all Parts of Life, how easily Reason is resigned to Humour, how contentedly 'tis supplanted, how easily the most important Things become exceptionable, and with what Favour the Exceptions of our own Ignorance or Vices are heard against 'em. The Unhappiness of being hinder'd from an impartial Consideration of Religion, whether by the Internal Influence of Vice, or by any external Violence, is certainly very great; and it is, I think, one of the best Services any Man can do rational Creatures, to raise in 'em an Appetite for it, and assist 'em in its proper Satisfaction.

Christians begin with the New Testament.

CHAP. I.

The rational Method of laying the Foundation of a Religious Life.

Chriſtians begin with the New Teſtament.

THE Generality of Chriſtians begin with the New Teſtament, and muſt for ſome time be contented with Implicit Faith; but when their Minds open and enlarge themſelves, ſeveral Queſtions ſhou'd ariſe, and Anſwers ſhou'd be given 'em: And at ſuch a time they'll obſerve, that there are ſome Principles, and thoſe of the laſt Importance, which the New Teſtament does not aſſert or inſiſt on as new Revelations; but ſuppoſe or mention, as either believ'd already, or at leaſt ſufficiently ſupported, either by Nature, or by former Revelations: Such are the Being of a God, the Creation of the World, and the degenerating of human Nature. From the two former, will follow the fundamental Obligations to Religion in general; and from the latter will follow, that ſome particular Method for the Recovery of Man's Nature, is at leaſt deſirable; and this will prepare an inquiſitive Mind, to receive the Evidence for Chriſtianity, as it ſhall appear to deſerve his Credit. When he's gone

ſo

ſo far, he can't but think, that ſuch a Diſpenſation in general wou'd be a great Happineſs to Mankind. But this muſt be allow'd no Proof of it, no more than the Convenience of an infallible Judge on Earth proves that. He therefore proceeds to examine what Evidence there is for it, and the particular Conſtitution of the Diſpenſation itſelf.

And upon this Examination, to ſuch a Mind, the former Principles will appear reaſonably ſuppos'd.

A God. First, A God, *i. e.* a Spirit that poſſeſſes every good Quality we can conceive, in the higheſt Perfection; ſuch a Being will appear probable to him, when he's ſhown the gradual Increaſe of ſuch Qualities, in the ſeveral Parts of the World, as they approach nearer to that Perfection. Some things are not only groſs Matter, but intirely unfaſhion'd; others, tho' groſs Matter, are fram'd into ſome uſeful Shape, tho' without Life; others have Life added to an Organiz'd Body, but without Senſes; others have Senſes too, but not in ſuch Perfection as to qualify 'em for much Action; others have their Senſes in great Vigor, but with very little or no uſe of Reaſon; all theſe are below Man. Man himſelf conſiſts of an Organiz'd Body, and ſo much Capacity in reaſoning, that it can't well be

doubted, but he enjoys likewiſe a rational Spirit, united to that Body.

From hence 'tis probable, ſuch a Spirit may ſubſiſt without ſuch a Body, as ſome Bodies do without ſuch Spirits. And as ſome Parts of the World below Man, riſe by Degrees to his Perfection; 'tis natural to ſuppoſe, that the Parts above him increaſe likewiſe in their Degrees of Perfection, till they conclude at laſt in a pure Spirit that hath all poſſible Degrees of it; and ſuch a Spirit is what's meant by God.

Creation. And if he is ſatisfy'd of ſuch a Spirit, 'twill appear highly probable, that all other Parts of the World deriv'd their Being from him. But this only prepares him; without ſuppoſing this, 'twill appear abſolutely neceſſary from the Nature of things; for the World muſt either be from Eternity, or elſe begin by Chance, or elſe be created by ſome ſuch Spirit.

A Succeſſion of things from Eternity, ſeems a plain Contradiction; it affirms, both that every thing began to be, and yet that ſomething was eternall, *i. e.* did not begin. And that Things ſhou'd begin by Chance, is as impoſſible. Chance is an accidental Concurrence of Cauſes, producing ſome Effect; but ſuch a Concurrence is evidently impoſſible, when there are no Cauſes in Being to concur; which there cou'd not be, antecedent to the Being of all Things;

Things: They muſt therefore be created by ſuch a Spirit, therefore there muſt be a God.

When he's ſatisfied of this, the Nature of ſuch a Spirit will lead him to ſuppoſe, that all Things were created perfect and regular in their Kind; and when he's directed to obſerve the various Wickedneſs of the World, and particularly the unnatural Revolt of Mankind from the Worſhip of their Maker, to the Worſhip of the moſt unworthy of his Creatures, to blind Superſtitions and Idolatries; he can hardly forbear concluding upon this view of Mankind, that ſome great Change has happen'd in his Nature, tho' he can't gueſs at the Occaſion. *All things created perfect.*

And while he conſiders Man, the moſt perfect in his kind of all the viſible Creation, thus ſunk into Vices unworthy of his Nature, and thus alienated from his Maker by falſe Gods; 'tis reaſonable to expect ſome Aſſiſtance from the Goodneſs of that perfect Spirit to recover him. If therefore any ſuch Aſſiſtance appears with any plauſible Authority, he can't but wiſh it may be true; and will probably undertake the Examination of its Evidence, with ſincere Inclinations to embrace it, if he finds it ſufficiently ſupported. *Man ſunk.*

This is the true Foundation for Revelations: Here therefore we may ſuppoſe him examining thoſe of the Old and New *Foundation of Revelation.*

Teſtament, with regard both to their Authority and their Contents.

Old and New Teſtament examin'd,

With regard to their Authority, his Labour may be ſhortned by this Conſideration. If the Authority of the New Teſtament be good, that of the Old muſt be ſo too; becauſe all the Doctrines of the Old, not peculiar to the *Jews*, are recogniz'd and confirm'd, and made uſe of, as Principles and Foundations in the New.

If therefore this Recognition, this Confirmation, this Uſe of 'em be by divine Authority, there can remain no doubt of their Truth.

Authority of the N. Teſtament proved.

That the New Teſtament has ſuch Authority, muſt be proved by diſtinct Evidence: That the Books of it were indeed writ by the Authors they claim, is the firſt Step. And for this, 'tis ſufficient Evidence to a Man thus ſincerely diſpoſed, if they can't be rejected but upon ſuch Principles as equally reject all Authors that have no living Vouchers. And ſuch Evidence they have,

Genuine,

they are mention'd as Genuine, by Authors of all Ages, to the Times in which they were writ. So many of 'em as contain the whole of Chriſtianity, were conſtantly receiv'd as Genuine, without any Suſpicion, without any Pretence of an Objection from the boldeſt of their Adverſaries. They were long preſerv'd under the Hand-writing of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts: it was very

eaſy

eaſy in thoſe Days, to have diſcover'd any ſuch Impoſtures. The Enemies of Chriſtianity were highly concern'd to diſprove 'em if poſſible; but none ever pretended in thoſe Times to undertake it. And their being ſo univerſally ſpread, and ſo generally eſteem'd among Chriſtians, even beyond Life itſelf, for which we have the Authority of unqueſtionable Hiſtory; all this will probably ſatisfy any ſincere Enquirer as to this Point.

True in its Contents.

The next Queſtion is, Whether what they writ might be depended on as true? As to this, 'tis a ſtrong Preſumption in their Favour, that they cou'd propoſe no Intereſt; they were to expect nothing but the Fatigue and Dangers of propagating the Goſpel; their Reward was referr'd to Heaven, a Place that ought not to be mention'd to Impoſtors, leaſt by reminding 'em of its contrary, it ſhou'd ſink their Spirits, and fright 'em out of their Deſign. They muſt certainly know, whether what they atteſted were true or not; and if they knew it to be falſe, the leaſt we can ſuppoſe is, that they were weary of this World, and believ'd no other: Were there any thing they lov'd in this, or any thing they fear'd in the other, they cou'd not wantonly deſtroy themſelves, they cou'd not patiently ſubmit to a violent Death, in Defence of a fruitleſs Forgery.

This

The Nature of their Doctrine supports this Presumption.

This Presumption is supported by the Nature of their Doctrine. Had any publick Revolutions been attempted by it, or had the Corruptions of Nature comforted or countenanced themselves by any thing advanc'd in it, there might have been some grounds for Suspicion. But when the whole Drift of it is to promote Piety and Charity, an affectionate Behaviour towards God and Man; when it endeavours to promote these, and suppress the Riots of Nature, by Rewards and Punishments plac'd in a future State; in these Circumstances, a moderate Degree of Evidence wou'd incline an honest Mind to believe it.

But that they really gave a true Account both of Christ and of themselves, of his Miracles and his Doctrines, of their own Mission, Inspiration and Authority, this may appear from hence: Those Books were made publick so soon, and they appeal so freely for the Truth of the most important Things to living Witnesses, that if the Particulars related in 'em had not been plain incontestible Truths, great Numbers then alive had immediately disprov'd 'em.

Consequences of their Truth.

From hence an impartial Enquirer shou'd proceed to examine the Things themselves thus attested, and consider what Consequences will follow. And supposing the History of the Gospel concerning Christ and his Apostles to be true, supposing this prov'd to his

his Satisfaction; 'twill certainly follow with reſpect to Chriſt, that he was inveſted with ſupernatural Power. If the Cure of ſo many grievous Diſeaſes, without the Application of any natural Means, does not put this beyond all Deſire of farther Evidence; the ſeveral Inſtances of Perſons rais'd by him from the Dead, may be added to it; and if theſe ſeem to want any thing to ſupport 'em, his own Triumph over Death, the Exerciſe of this ſovereign Power in his own Perſon, in riſing from the Grave the Third Day of his Interment, this is alone ſufficient for that Purpoſe. This was promis'd and appeal'd to by Chriſt himſelf when living, as a Proof of all his Pretenſions; and God's Concurrence in it muſt confirm thoſe Pretenſions. The mighty Works he perform'd, appear from hence true Miracles, *i. e.* Works perform'd by an extraordinary Power from God; And this Confirmation of his Miracles, confirms the Truth of his Doctrines.

Chriſt inveſted with ſupernatural Power.

These having been frequently appeal'd to as a full Proof of their Truth, the profeſs'd Deſign of 'em being to gain Credit to thoſe Doctrines, the Concurrence of God muſt of neceſſity conclude for that Credit. The Nature of God, the Foundation of all Certainty, both religious and natural, may eaſily convince us, that where-ever he concurs with a ſupreme Power to ſupport ſuch im-

portant Pretenſions, they muſt be true, and the Doctrines ſo eſtabliſh'd, have all the Confirmation poſſible.

Apoſtles commiſſion'd from Heaven.

Suppoſing the Truth of the Goſpel Hiſtory, 'twill follow likewiſe, That the Apoſtles of Chriſt were particularly commiſſion'd from Heaven, to explain and propagate, and confirm his Doctrines; and that they were qualify'd to execute this Commiſſion by immediate Inſpiration, and by a Power truly miraculous; and that therefore all they teach us is certainly true. This Commiſſion, and all the Powers attending it, were promis'd by Chriſt in his Life; under the Aſſurance of another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. This is mention'd only by St. *John*, and was made for the Confirmation of their Faith afterwards. The Aſſurance of theſe Powers is repeated after his Reſurrection, and is recorded by all Four Evangeliſts. They were order'd by Chriſt to continue at *Jeruſalem* till this Promiſe ſhou'd be fulfill'd; and it was fulfill'd accordingly, in the moſt publick Manner. The Inſtructions of others muſt conſiſt, 1. In proper Thoughts: 2. In Words that expreſs 'em intelligibly: 3. In a ſufficient Evidence of their Truth. And in all theſe Particulars, the Apoſtles were compleatly qualify'd for this great Work. They were inſpir'd with a diſtinct and clear Knowledge of all Chriſt's Doctrines: The Spirit was to teach 'em all Things,

Things, and bring all Things to their Remembrance, whatſoever he had ſaid unto 'em. And to make this Knowledge anſwer the End of their Inſpiration; they were endued with the Gift of Tongues; the Spirit gave 'em Utterance; and Men of all Nations under Heaven, heard 'em ſpeak in their ſeveral Languages, the wonderful Works of God. And that their Doctrines might want no poſſible Evidence, they were inveſted likewiſe with ſupernatural Power; the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following.

St. Paul *added.*

To this Commiſſion was added the great Apoſtle of the *Gentiles*. After he had ſignaliz'd himſelf in perſecuting Chriſtianity; and when he was actually on a Journey to extirpate its Profeſſors at *Damaſcus*, he was converted by an immediate Application from Heaven; and then ſent forth a zealous, powerful and ſucceſsful Champion for the Faith. After all this, no reaſonable doubt can remain, but that what they preached is true, and rationally to be depended on as ſuch.

The Satisfaction of theſe general Principles.

Thus far ſuch an Enquirer may fix his Thoughts; theſe general Principles may be ettled, before he comes to a particular Examination; or attempts to account for any Difficulties that ſtick with him, and diſcourage his Zeal. And it muſt be no ſmall Satisfaction, to be able to proceed ſo far in the Knowledge of himſelf, in the Explica-

tion of the Condition of his Nature, of the Dependance it has for its preſent and future Happineſs; to know where to go for compleat Inſtructions, to ſee good Reaſon to reſign to Chriſt, to join his Apoſtles in their Preference of him to all other Maſters: To whom ſhall we go? Thou haſt the Words of eternal Life. When he's come thus far, he has nothing elſe to do, but to acquaint himſelf with the Doctrines of thoſe ſacred Books, and form his Soul by 'em. Whatever Queſtions ariſe concerning 'em, will upon due Attention receive juſt Anſwers, or at leaſt be ſilenced without any prejudice to Religion, by the Certainty of ſome general Principle; under the Protection of which, he may indulge his Reaſon to the utmoſt of his Capacity, without any danger to his Faith.

CHAP. II.

Some Conſiderations concerning Revelation, and the Progreſs of it from the Beginning of the World.

Deiſts ſuſpected. HOW it ſhould come to paſs that Revelation in general ſhou'd find any Enemies in the World, but the fallen Angels,

gels, and their desperate Disciples, is not easy to imagine. As to the usual Incredulity with respect to all particular Revelations now extant, profess'd together with a dutiful Submission to all Parts of natural Religion; this Intricacy of Soul may possibly by others be otherwise explained, but I can't help suspecting it of Artifice and Amusement. I should chuse to conclude such Professors guilty of Hyprocrisy, rather than go about to account for their Profession; they may justly be suspected, either to magnify their Allegiance to natural Religion, or to lessen their Allegiance to reveal'd; either their Faith is better then they pretend to, or their Morals worse.

Sober Scepticks.

As to others, who in their serious Thoughts upon religious Subjects may be too subtil for themselves, and start more Questions than they think they can answer; when I have review'd the present State of Revelation, I hope I may contribute to the Satisfaction of such Persons, and incline 'em to think, that they were partial to their Objections as their First-born, and did not do Justice to the real Merits of their own Answers. I believe it often adds unnatural strength to Suspicions and Jealousies of this kind, that our own Character comes by degrees to be concern'd in 'em. When an Argument is plainly answer'd, it don't appear so ingenious as before; and not to insist,

ſiſt, ſeems like retiring into the common Herd, no more to be diſtinguiſh'd by ſhrewd Inſinuations. And where nothing of this Nature has influenc'd the Mind, the Exceſſes of other Men, the irregular Sallies of Zeal or Intereſt towards either Extreme, have rais'd much Prejudice, and too often produc'd that careleſs and ungrateful Concluſion, *May my Soul ſettle with Philoſophers.*

A Series of ſpiritual Providence.

Whoever will ſeriouſly examine what God has done for his Soul, may obſerve a regular Series of Spiritual Providence carry'd quite thro' the World, which may perhaps be moſt uſefully conſider'd under the common Diſtinction of Three Ages. God ſeems to have treated the whole Race of Mankind, thro' theſe ſeveral Ages, with the ſame gradual Advances of Inſtruction, which the Capacities of a ſingle Man require in the ſeveral Stages of his Life. In the Infancy of the World they were taught little more than to diſtinguiſh their Creator, and pay ſome outward Signs of Reverence and Love: They were in this firſt Age chiefly protected againſt Idolatry and Impiety.

In the Second Age, from the Eſtabliſhment of the Law to the Publication of the Goſpel, St. *Paul* compares their Condition to that of Children capable of a more advanc'd Education, under Tutors and Governors; and the Admonitions of their Pro-

phets

phets were as the Interpositions of careful Parents, reproving 'em for neglecting the Instructions of those Tutors and Governors.

The Third Age was the Time appointed by the Father. In this they were settled in perfect Liberty, made perfect Men in Christ, and qualify'd for the best Use of Life; they were fully acquainted with their Inheritance, and directed how to improve it; they were admitted to a more familiar Converse with God; they are oblig'd only to the most reasonable Service, and see plainly the Rewards of it: *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto our Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.* Heb. 1. 1. The original Word, Πολυμερῶς, does properly signify many Parts; not an entire Discovery of God's Will at once, but a gradual Declaration of it, as his Wisdom saw fit. And according to the Character of the Person, or the Nature of the Occasion, he made his Will known by several Ways; in Dreams, or Visions, or the Conversation of an Angel, or personal, internal Revelations. But the Messiah wanted none of these Methods; he was in the Father, and the Father in him; in him dwelt the Fulness of the Godhead bodily; a personal Union with the Deity, enabled him to declare the whole Counsel of Heaven.

Revelation in the First Age.

Such Revelations as were delivered in the First Age, are not to be suppos'd recorded at large. *Moses* was to give the most useful History of the State of Mankind to his own Time; had he done this in such a Manner, as to have satisfy'd even the reasonable Curiosity of such as were at leisure, and inclin'd to enquire into all Particulars, he had made his Work useless to a great Majority of those for whom he writ it. From hence Occasion may be taken by such as would be thought wise at a cheap Rate, to raise several Objections; but he was to give only an Epitome of the History of the World. Many Revelations therefore may be probably suppos'd omitted, and of those that are recorded, only the Sum or general Purport, we may conclude, is related. This Brevity is probably the Cause we have so little notice taken of the Observation of the *Sabbath* before the Law; for tho' the First Age was certainly far short of the others in the Treasures of Revelation, 'tis surely presuming too far to rob it of that Important one, the Institution of a *Sabbath*. The Text in which it appears to be ordain'd, has indeed been disputed; but the Turn that's given to it, seems very strange To suppose this Text to refer, not to the Order of Time in which 'tis plac'd, but to the Time of *Moses* himself: To suppose the Creation recogniz'd, as a Reason of God's Instituting a

The Sabbath.

Gen. 2. 2, 3.

abbath then; a Reaſon, which he had ffer'd to ſleep 2500 Years: To ſuppoſe this Oppoſition to the moſt natural Order of arration, and the moſt probable Seaſon for ch an Inſtitution: To ſuppoſe the Author inſert a Proleptical Comment on his own iſtory ſo much out of Place: All this ou'd ſeem only an Expedient in diſtreſs, d not a *Limborch*, as well as a *Heylin*, pear'd for it. And as it uſually happens, e bold Step has made another neceſſary. he Reſt commanded on the ſeventh Day their gathering Manna, gives this Rea-n, *It was the holy Sabbath unto the Lord.* Exod. 16. 23. t this too muſt be Anticipation only, no *bbath* muſt be imagined in Being, tho' preſly aſſerted; but a ſtrict Reſt muſt be ſerv'd on the ſeventh Day, only becauſe was deſigned to be afterwards conſecrated ſuch. It appears highly reaſonable to nclude, either that the original Inſtitution been renew'd, ſince the Departure of *Iſraelites* from *Egypt*, and at this time ſtrict Reſt was added to it, which be-e had never been enjoin'd; or elſe, that Inſtitution itſelf was at this time re-'d. Mr. *Mede* inſiſts, they could not e obſerv'd this Day before, becauſe on laſt ſeventh Day they had made a weari-e March: But why may not the Neceſſ of Affairs ſuperſede the ſtrict Obſer-ce of one *Sabbath*, as well as the uſe of

Circumciſion for ſo many Years; eſpecially if it be conſider'd, that the Reſt of the Day was not yet enjoyn'd? The long Diſuſe of God's regular Worſhip, among the univerſal Corruptions of the World, cou'd not ſo far extirpate ſuch an Inſtitution, but that the Memory of it muſt remain; and tho' there appears no deciſive Proofs of its Obſervation throughout the Hiſtory of thoſe 200 Years, from the Call of *Abram*, to his Poſterities going into *Egypt*; this is no Negative upon it. And tho' their Condition in *Egypt* after the Death of *Joſeph* might not admit of its Obſervation, 'tis very probable from the manner of ordaining the ſtrict Reſt mention'd as before, they had not forgot it.

Relig. Vet. *Vol.* I. *c.* 13.

M. Jurieu eſpouſes the Negative in this Queſtion, and gives us this Interpretation of the Text upon which it is founded, *Gen.* 2, 3. It means, he ſays, that God deſign'd the ſeventh Day for his Service; but is it neceſſary, a Thing deſign'd for a particular Uſe ſhou'd immediately be put to it? A Parent deſigns his Son for the Law, &c. muſt he therefore immediately enter upon the Practice of it? To apply this Similitude, and explain this Queſtion by it, we muſt ſuppoſe this Parent to deſign his Son ſhall begin to practiſe at Fifty Years old and only upon ſuch Cauſes as ariſe in his own Pariſh; for the *Sabbath*, upon this Hy-

pothe

othesis, was not to take Place till the
Vorld was 2500 Years old, and then only
the Commonwealth of *Israel*. But since
his Learned Author has undertaken to re-
resent the whole Strength of both sides of
his Question, it may not be amiss to take a
hort view of the Arguments he has col-
ected for the Part he takes in it. He gives
m in this Order.

1. *Moses*'s Silence concerning the actual
bservation of it by the Patriarchs; tho'
mentions their Vows, Prayers, Sacrifi-
s, *&c.*

2. *Moses* is very exact in giving us an
count of the Sins of that Generation,
t says nothing of their neglecting this.

3. 'Tis agreed, God gave no other posi-
e Command to *Adam*, but that of ab-
ining from a particular Tree.

4. This contains something contrary to
State of Innocency in which *Adam* was,
t supposes him to want Rest.

5. Had this been instituted so soon, it
u'd have been obligatory to the whole
ce; but the *Jews* only are accountable
it; it does not appear to oblige from
Law of Nature.

6. Had it been so ancient, *Moses* wou'd
e urged its Antiquity to the *Israelites*,
a Recommendation to engage them to

7. 'Tis urged upon 'em by Reasons peculiar to themselves, as their having been Servants in *Egypt*, &c.

8. God calls it a Sign of a Covenant between him and them, and therefore it must be peculiar to 'em.

9. God often declares both by the Mouth of *Moses* and the Prophets, that he instituted the *Sabbath* for the *Israelites*.

10. It could not be so ancient, because it must suppose publick Places of Worship, which 'tis certain there were not.

As to the first of these Arguments, 'twas of great Use to mention such Acts of Devotion as were occasional and voluntary; this was setting their Characters in a proper Light, and proposing them as Examples of eminent Piety and Devotion: But supposing the *Sabbath* in force, 'twould have been no Advantage to such a Character, to mention particularly their observing that. Their intermitting their common Business for this End, might very well be suppos'd; 'twas no more remarkable that they observ'd such a Rest, than it was that they took their natural Repose each Night.

2. If we suppose them to have been sometimes guilty of neglecting this Duty, it was not so necessary to record this, as the other Crimes recorded. These have generally some Consequences of moment depend-

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ing on 'em; and if we conſider them in an exemplary View, they were Matters in themſelves of greater moment, than particular Neglects of the *Sabbath*; and the *Jews* were at that time under deep Impreſſions of that Inſtitution; and therefore in ſo ſhort a Hiſtory, ſuch Records might be thought unneceſſary.

3. When 'tis ſaid, that God's only poſitive Command to *Adam*, was concerning the Tree of Knowledge; this may very juſtly be underſtood to mean no more than this, that 'twas the only Command peculiar to *Adam*, and in this Senſe 'tis true; but no Argument in this Caſe; for this Command is ſuppos'd univerſal, including the whole Race.

The 4th, 7th, 8th and 9th Arguments, ſeem all to proceed upon this Miſtake, not obſerving the Diſtinction between the Reſt of the ſeventh Day, as ſtrictly enjoyn'd by the Law and the Religion, and for the ſake of that, the Intermiſſion of common Buſineſs originally inſtituted. The Patrons of this original Inſtitution conſtantly inſiſt on this Diſtinction; and it gives an obvious Anſwer to all that's urg'd under theſe four Heads. *Adam* was not to obſerve the legal Reſt, nor any for the ſake of reſting; but only to make room for his Devotion, which in a State of Innocence did not ſuperſede. And whatever is found relating to the *Sab-*

bath, peculiar to the *Jews*, is to be referr'd not to the original Command, but to the ſecond Edition in the Wilderneſs, when the ſtrict Reſt was inſiſted on; and a peculiar View given it, a Reſpect to their Bondage in *Egypt*, and their Deliverance from it.

5. The fifth Argument takes for its Foundation, what muſt in courſe be deny'd by every Man that aſſerts this Inſtitution. Whoever affirms, that God ordain'd it at firſt as a Memorial to Mankind of their Creation, will never ſcruple to inſiſt that it obliges the whole Race. What is here offer'd to prove the contrary, is either preſuming again upon what is in Queſtion, that the *Jews* only are accountable for it; or elſe it proceeds upon the ſame Miſtake that was before obſerv'd, not diſtinguiſhing the two diſtinct Inſtitutions. It ſeems rather to urge in general, that none but *Jews* are oblig'd to it; and gives this inſtead of a Reaſon, that none ever conceived Mankind puniſhable by the Law of Nature for breaking the *Sabbath*. If it had been firſt prov'd, that there muſt be ſome Law of Nature to give force to God's poſitive Laws, I ſhou'd have ſubmitted to this Appeal; but if none ſuch be wanted, only that general Law ariſing from our Relation, which obliges us to obey all his Commands; then a poſitive Inſtitution given to the whole Race, will be of Force univerſally, and all will be

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accountable for its Obſervance, who were not invincibly ignorant of the Inſtitution itſelf, tho' no Law of Nature implies it.

6. The Sixth is a Preſumption, that *Moſes* wou'd not drop any Argument that cou'd be truly made uſe of. Antiquity has its Force upon regular, modeſt Minds; but when Men are inclin'd to break looſe from Religious Inſtitutions, they'll ſcarce be reſtrain'd by that; ſome petulant Anſwer will always be ready. But were its Influence greater, it had been unneceſſary at this Time; becauſe the *Sabbath* had been lately reinforc'd, urg'd with ſo much Majeſty and Terror on their Minds, and made one of the Ten Commandments written by the Finger of God.

10. The laſt Argument is taken from a falſe Turn given to the Inſtitution; ſuppoſing it deſign'd for the Convenience of great Numbers only, that they might have the Times of Publick Worſhip fix'd. This is a very good Uſe of it; but 'tis only a Conſequence. The original Reaſon is plain, in the Words of the Inſtitution: 'Twas to remind Mankind of their Creator. It had not been uſeleſs, if only private Retirement had been propos'd by it: But Publick Worſhip was ſoon practicable. To conſtitute that, a Publick Aſſembly is indeed neceſſary; but why muſt that be ſuppos'd what we now mean by a Church Externally

ternally form'd? Was not a Houſe publick enough at firſt? Was not a ſingle Family a competent Congregation? Can it be ſuppos'd, that all Joint-Worſhip was to be neglected, till the World was improv'd into Temples and Synagogues? If not; why not a Time appointed for it?

After theſe Arguments, the Author makes a general Appeal to Authority: And this Topick has been laboriouſly purſued by another Eminent Hand. But this, like the Air, is common for all to breathe in; it can never be enclos'd, never exhauſted. They who have the beſt Lungs, will, in Courſe, make moſt Uſe of it: They who are moſt indefatigable in tranſcribing, will always have moſt Authorities on their Side. All I ſhall add, at preſent, is this; That I believe, the Bulk of his Authorities may be removed, by diſtinguiſhing between the *Jewiſh*, and the Original *Sabbath*.

Dr. Heylin's *Hiſt.* Sab.

To conclude this Point. The Univerſality of this Inſtitution appears to be much ſtrengthen'd, by its being plac'd as the Fourth, among Nine other Univerſal and Perpetual Commandments; eſpecially ſince what was peculiar to the *Jews*, ſeems purpoſely left out. Here's no Reference to their Deliverance from *Egypt*, but only to the Creation; no other Reſt enjoin'd, but what

what must be suppos'd enjoin'd *Gen.* 2. 2, 3. Such an Intermission of Secular Business, as made Room for the Devotions of the Day.

Where the Creation is given as the Reason, it may be concluded to oblige Men as Creatures. And tho' 'tis call'd a Sign between God and the Children of *Israel*, where this universal Reason is given for it, that's only because it was in Fact so: The rest of the World having lost the Institution; and God not proposing to renew it among 'em, by any Prophets or Revelations, as long as the Commonwealth of *Israel* subsisted.

This therefore we may reckon the First Universal Revelation, calculated to preserve the Allegiance of Mankind to the Creator of the World. This Universal Reference was design'd to be perpetual. What was peculiar to the *Jews*, referring to their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, must fall with their Law: And as the exact Return of the Seventh Day from the Creation, was probably not regarded at this Second Institution, but gave way to the Memory of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*; so after the Resurrection of Christ, that was to give way to the Memory of the Universal Redemption. *The Use of it.* Col. 2. 16, 17.

The Original Design in both Cases is sufficiently answer'd, by a Seventh Day's being *The Day chang'd.*

ing obſerv'd: 'Tis ſufficient, that after Six Days Labour, we dedicate a Seventh to God. If this Proportion be obſerv'd, no Injury is offer'd to the Primitive Inſtitution; tho' the particular Day be chang'd, by ſome competent Authority. The Preſervative againſt imaginary Gods, and a regular Return of Piety, ſubſiſts; and is a ſtanding Argument of God's Concern for Mankind.

Revelations to Adam.

Adam had probably many Converſations with Angels before his Fall; but the only one mention'd, is the Liberty and Reſtraint preſcrib'd for him in Paradiſe: He was in-

Gen. 2. 16, 17.

form'd, he might eat of all the Trees, *that* only excepted, which ſtood in the Midſt of the Garden. 'Tis very reaſonable to preſume, this was deliver'd to him with more Particulars; and the Penalty or Sanction with which 'twas ſupported, was probably better underſtood by him, than it is by us. He knew, and was happy at that Time, in an immortal Conſtitution; he might therefore apprehend what he was to loſe, better than we can what we have loſt: We, who have experienc'd only the Adverſity of Human Nature. Nor is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe it deliver'd to him in the ſame Words, in which the Hiſtorian recites it. Thoſe Words were well underſtood by long Experience, when *Moſes* writ; and it was therefore ſufficient to expreſs it in that Manner; but 'twas probably denounc'd at firſt in ſuch

Terms, as brought with 'em a moſt terrible Explication: Death being yet an utter Stranger in the World, at leaſt in Human Subjects.

After his Offence, the Angel of the Lord detected and reprov'd him; and then put the Sentence in Execution againſt him, expell'd him Paradiſe, and thereby expos'd him to the Hardſhips of Life; leaving the Seeds of Diſorder, Diſeaſes and Death, to work out their Malignity in him. But before he was expell'd, the Angel, in the Name of God, gave him this Comfort; *That the Seed of the Woman ſhould bruiſe the Serpent's Head*; ſtill inſiſting on the Penalty; and declaring, *The Serpent ſhould bruiſe the Heel of Man.* And as this is deliver'd not directly to *Adam*, but to the Serpent; 'tis moſt probable, the ſame Doctrine had been deliver'd to him more copiouſly. This renew'd the comfortable Proſpect of a Saviour; one that ſhould fruſtrate the Subtilty of the Serpent, in his main Deſign; tho' he ſhould ſtill be ſuffer'd to perſecute our mortal Part. This was the firſt Dawn of Chriſtianity; and from hence, to its Meridian Glory, the Doctrine of a Mediator is viſible in all the great Lines of Revelation: *Moſes* and the Prophets ſpeak of him.

Gen. 3. 15.

Acts 26. 22.

Parti-

Sacrifices. Particularly, in Sacrifices: For notwithſtanding all the Pains that have been taken to weaken the Authority of this Inſtitution, I can't but think, we have ſufficient Reaſon to aſſert it as divine. 'Tis, indeed, not expreſs'd; but ſufficiently imply'd in Practice.

'Tis probable, they were enjoin'd *Adam*, after his Expulſion out of Paradiſe: Not before; becauſe 'tis moſt reaſonable to ſuppoſe 'em inſtituted as Types of Chriſt. We find *Cain* and *Abel* offering Sacrifices, according to their Characters; *Cain*, of the Fruits of the Ground; *Abel*, of the Firſtlings of his Flock. And God made known to 'em his Acceptance of *Abel's*, and his Diſregard to *Cain's*; and declar'd the Reaſon of it, the Moral Difference there was in their Lives. 'Tis hard to account for this Practice of *Cain* and *Abel*, (Perſons of ſuch different Moral Characters) without ſuppoſing ſome Common Authority on which to found it: And 'tis much harder to account for this particular Notice taken of it by God, and his diſtinct Conduct upon it; had not that Authority been his own Inſtitution.

And if Sacrifices were inſtituted, as early Intimations of that full, Perfect, Sufficient one on the Croſs, and as a conſtant Admonition, that Men want ſome Atonement to reconcile 'em to God; (which we may con-

conclude as well from this Inſtance, as from *Noah*'s Sacrificing, when he came out of the Ark; and particularly, clean Beaſts, and Fowls; which ſeems to imply ſome accurate Directions about 'em; and from *Abram*'s Sacrificing, by the particular Directions of God;) then this Revelation eſtabliſh'd a Solemn Commemoration of the Redemption of the World covenanted for, as the Inſtitution of the *Sabbath* did of its Creation; the Two great Sources of Human Obligation. Gen. 8. 20. Gen. 15. 9, 10.

Moral Righteouſneſs.

And the juſt Conſequence of theſe was not neglected. In God's Expoſtulation with *Cain*, the Importance of Moral Righteouſneſs is ſtrongly inſiſted on; an Importance, preferr'd to the outward Acts of Worſhip; and, as it was either abſent or preſent, making them either acceptable, or abominable to God.

Noah.

Accordingly, the next Evidence upon Record, of God's Concern for Mankind in their Religious Conduct, is the Hiſtory of *Noah*. St. *Peter* tells us, he was *a preacher of righteouſneſs*. Without doubt, he did not preach without being ſent; tho' this likewiſe through Brevity is omitted. And what the ſame Apoſtle ſays in another place, of the Long-ſuffering of God while the Ark was preparing, implies, God was pleas'd to allow ſo much Time for *Noah* to try the Influence of his Doctrine: But yet he declared, 2 Pet. 2. 5. Gen. 12.

Gen. 6. 3. clared, he would *not always ſtrive with man*; if his Preaching was ſlighted for 120 Years, the Preacher only ſhould find Mercy, and his Family for his Sake.

When he had been ſome Time out of the Ark, God expreſs'd his Satisfaction in his Burnt-Offerings. This Satisfaction is recorded in theſe Words; *The Lord ſmell'd a ſweet ſavour.* God then gave him Precepts againſt Cruelty and Murder; and promis'd, with a viſible Token of its Certainty, that he would not viſit the World again in that ſevere Manner.

Gen. 8. 21.

But notwithſtanding the Severity of God, in deſtroying the Old World, and his Goodneſs in providing proper Inſtructions for the New; Wickedneſs prevail'd apace: Within leſs than Five Hundred Years, the World was degenerate univerſally; Idolatry reign'd without Controul: God therefore was pleas'd to purify to himſelf a peculiar People, to raiſe to himſelf a Church, that ſhould be free from it: And, in order to that, call'd *Abram* from the Midſt of his idolatrous Relations; gave him a large Proſpect of his future Diſpenſations towards him in both Worlds; promis'd to make his Poſterity numerous as the Stars, and, from them, to produce a Bleſſing to the World, whoſe Influence ſhould be univerſal as the Sun's. And, to this Promiſe, large as Ambition could

Abram.

Gen. 12.

could wiſh, an Aſſurance was added of compleat Happineſs in Heaven.

That the Meſſiah was the Bleſſing here promiſed, appears upon St. *Paul's* Authority; where he ſays, *The ſcripture foreſeeing, that God would juſtify the heathen through faith preached before the Goſpel unto Abraham, ſaying, In thee ſhall all families of the earth be bleſſed.* Gal. 3. 8.

And that he had a Proſpect likewiſe of an Inheritance in Heaven, we are aſſur'd by the ſame Apoſtle: He ſays, *He looked for a city which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God: A city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* This Aſſurance was continued among his Poſterity: This was the Foundation of their Worſhip, till the Eſtabliſhment of the Law, four Hundred and thirty Years. During this Time, they ſacrific'd to the True God, and ſignaliz'd themſelves as his peculiar People by Circumciſion. On this Aſſurance, *Moſes* deſpis'd the Grandeur of *Pharaoh's* Court; *eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the treaſures of Egypt: For he had reſpect unto the recompence of reward.* Heb. 11. 10. —— 25.

But however, this peculiar People, with the Worſhip of the True God, with the Seal of Circumciſion, with the Proſpect of Eternal Life, were much polluted with the Idols of *Egypt*; as may be ſeen at large

in the 20th of *Ezekiel*. When he had therefore deliver'd 'em from Slavery, the *Uſes of the Law.* Law was given 'em for theſe Uſes: 1. To preſerve 'em from Idolatry: 2. To typify the Diſpenſations of their Meſſiah: And, 3. To preſerve a regular Worſhip of the True God, as a ſtanding Example, and Reproof, to the Idolatrous Heathen World.

Second Age. This was the Second Age; and herein the Fundamental Principle, an Eternal State of Happineſs, was ſuppos'd. 'Twas not the Buſineſs of the Law, to eſtabliſh it; it had been faithfully continued from *Abraham* to *Moſes*: They were now to be ſettled in a regular Method of Life, both Religious and Civil. And God having given 'em ſuch Ordinances, as ſuited their Inclinations to the External Pomps of Worſhip, and (at the ſame Time) guarded 'em againſt being corrupted by the evil Communication of their idolatrous Neighbours; he encourag'd their Compliance to the Inconveniences of ſuch a Diſpenſation, by large Temporal Promiſes; which, as far as they were National, were very remarkably fulfill'd. This is St. *Paul*'s Account of the Law; *It* Gal. 3. 19. *was added becauſe of tranſgreſſions, till the promis'd Seed ſhould come*; *i. e.* To keep 'em in ſome tolerable Order; to preſerve 'em from the Confuſion of Idolatry and Licentiouſneſs, to the Incarnation of Chriſt. That all *this* was done with a View to Chriſt

Christ, appears from the 24th Verse of that Chapter; the Law is there declar'd a *Schoolmaster, to bring 'em to him.* And that the Heathens were not neglected in it, may appear from several Particulars in the 20th Chapter of *Ezekiel.* They were not design'd to be included in the entire Obligation; this was inconsistent with the Constitution of the Law: But their Idolatry was to be discourag'd; they were to be invited to the Service of the True God, by the Publick Establishment of it among the *Jews*, and the Favour he shew'd 'em for the Sake of it. *Heathens not quite overlook'd.*

This Dispensation is so particularly recorded, it need not here be any farther insisted on. But another great Branch of God's Care for this Age of the World, was to second and support this; which was, his sending inspir'd Prophets, to reprove his degenerated People, and speak more spiritually than the Law had before spoken. These Reproofs turn'd upon declaring God's Judgments upon their Idolatry and Vices; and were so many Efforts made by Heaven, to preserve the Purity of Religion: But so far they only declar'd more particularly, what the Law itself had in general declar'd before. But they insisted likewise on Two great Points, which seem to have been almost worn out of their Minds; The Importance of Moral Virtue, at that Time *Prophets.*

ſupplanted by their external Ceremonies; and the Bleſſing promis'd to *Abraham*, the approaching Incarnation of the Great Meſſiah; with a more ſpiritual Deſcription of his Perſon and Character, than had ever yet been reveal'd. Hard indeed muſt thoſe Hearts be, that took no Impreſſion from ſuch Applications. 'Twas not quite ſo bad with that obſtinate People; ſome Impreſſions they did make on 'em, but ſuch as ſoon wore out: Their Provocations were ſoon repeated, till it ſeem'd no longer conſiſtent with the Majeſty of the Almighty, to ſtretch out his Arm to a diſobedient and gainſaying People.

Prophecy ceas'd.

Here therefore we muſt cloſe this View; here all ſuch Commerce with Heaven was ſuſpended; here God ceas'd to ſollicit by his Prophets. And a ſerious Conſideration of the World, as it was in that Interval, may be of good Uſe to make us truly thankful to God for the Bleſſings of Chriſtianity. The State of the *Jews* was ſuch, that their own Hiſtorian repreſents 'em as the moſt diſſolute Proſtitutes; and the State of the Heathens is repreſented in Miniature, but very much to the Life, by St. *Paul*, in his firſt Chapter to the *Romans*.

This Conſideration of human Nature thus univerſally diſtreſs'd, and reduc'd to great Extremities, may reaſonably have on us a very melancholick Influence; and it may

may not be amiſs to indulge it for ſome time: But while we thus ſit in Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death, how great ſhould be our Joy for the Light that lighten'd the *Gentiles*, and the Glory of *Iſrael*, God's degenerated People? With this began the Third Age, the Fulneſs of Time. The Revelations deliver'd in this, may perhaps be moſt uſefully conſider'd in this Method, as they relate to Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; for thus we find 'em ſumm'd up in the Original Form of Baptiſm. *The Third Age.*

CHAP. III.

The diſtinct Parts of Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, in the Oeconomy of Man's Redemption.

FROM the Father originally proceeds our Nature, and on him depends its eternal Diſpoſition. From hence ariſe theſe two Principles, 1. That he made a Covenant with our Redeemer for the Recovery of Mankind. 2. That in Conſequence of that Covenant, he eſtabliſh'd a glorious State of Immortality for the Pious and Virtuous, and a ſuitable State of Vengeance on the Impious and Vicious. *The Father.*

It may be of Uſe to premiſe here ſome Obſervations concerning Divine Covenants. Their having been variouſly repreſented, has probably occaſion'd ſome Miſtakes of Moment; and ſuch Miſtakes frequently produce Prejudices, where there is indeed no Ground for 'em in the Nature of the Thing.

Tho' this Word may properly enough expreſs the Subjects to which it is apply'd, yet there muſt be this Difference obſerv'd in Covenants form'd between independent Parties, and Covenants between Sovereigns and Subjects; eſpecially when the Sovereign is abſolute, and the Subjects entirely dependent; having no Right to claim any thing which that Sovereign ſhall think fit to withhold, nor any Right to object againſt any thing which he ſhall think fit to enjoin. This being the State of Covenants between God and Man, they are at the ſame time to be conſider'd by Men as Duties; and not only ſo, but as Favours too from God; and are likewiſe not improperly called Diſpenſations. But the Covenant betwixt the Father and the Son was of a ſuperior Nature; Chriſt was under no prior Obligations; he was entirely free to engage in it or not.

The original Word in the Old Teſtament is apply'd in great Latitude, and ſeems often to ſignify no more than a ſolemn Promiſe; and as ſuch, is apply'd to many Subjects. The Word by which that Original is conſtantly

tantly tranſlated by the *Septuagint*, is as conſtantly us'd in the New Teſtament, but pply'd to as great a Variety of Subjects. All Inſtances of Covenants in that may be pply'd, either to the Covenant made with *Abraham*, or that made with the *Iſraelites*, Gen. 15. Exod. 24. r to that made with all Mankind by God n Chriſt crucify'd. Where the Firſt and econd, the New and the Old Covenant re mention'd, their true Meaning is, the wo different Diſpenſations, the Legal and vangelical.

In Analogy to ſuch Expreſſions in Scripure, the Interpoſition of Chriſt in Behalf f Mankind, his ſettling the Terms of their edemption with the Father, are call'd the ovenant of Redemption, and very juſtly; the Repreſentations of Chriſt's tranſactg for us with the Father imply the Thing, o' the Word is not us'd; his Blood is freuently call'd, the Price of our Redemption; e Bleſſed Spirit is call'd, the Holy Spirit Promiſe; and eternal Life is ſaid to be omis'd before the World began. Here e plainly mutual Obligations. But in one Luke 22. 29. ace, in the Words of Chriſt himſelf, we ve the Verb, though not the Subſtantive, ply'd to that Immortal Affair, though it n't appear in our *Engliſh* Tranſlation; ατίθεμαι ὑμῖν, καθὼς διέθετο μοι ὁ Πατὴρ μου, βασιλείαν: *I appoint* [or covenant] *unto you kingdom, as my Father hath appointed* [or

covenanted] *unto me.* These Words are a ſufficient Authority for calling the Agreement between Chriſt and the Father for the Reſtoration of Mankind, the Covenant of Redemption; and they do at the ſame time direct us to diſtinguiſh between this, and all other Covenants mention'd in Scripture.

Whatever may have been the Sentiments of thoſe who have choſen to talk of Covenants in a manner different from that in which we find 'em repreſented in Scripture; others, who are led by their Authority, perhaps without having all their Thoughts, who follow their Light without having it held out plainly to 'em, have fallen into great Confuſion. From hence many fix their Thoughts to the New Covenant, as the Covenant of Redemption: From hence we often hear Perſons declar'd to be out of the Covenant; and again, to have no Fœderal or Covenant Right or Title to Salvation; confounding, at leaſt to common Apprehenſions, the Goſpel Covenant with the Covenant of Redemption, the Means with the End, a preſent Diſpenſation with a ſolemn Treaty concluded from the Foundation of the World. They, to whom the New Covenant is propos'd, are bound to ſubmit to it, and may forfeit all Benefit from the Original Covenant of Redemption by an undutiful and froward Contempt of it: But they are contain'd within that Original Co-

venant,

venant, whether they will or not; and in Proportion to ſuch Aggravations of their Wickedneſs, ſhall ſuffer by it; they ſhall be more miſerable than they would have been, had Chriſt never interpos'd in their Favour.

Sometimes, where thoſe Two Covenants are not confounded, at leaſt not by ſuch Authors themſelves; yet we hear of a Firſt and Second Covenant, in a Senſe utterly unknown to the Scriptures; which their Readers may probably confound with the Firſt and Second Covenant mention'd in the New Teſtament. And ſometimes we ſee very melancholick Effects from this Confuſion: When ſerious Perſons are entangled in Matters of ſuch Moment, no Man can anſwer for the Conſequence.

No leſs an Authority than that of St. *Auſtin's* laid the Foundation of this; and ſince his Time, the World has frequently been told of a Covenant made by God with *Adam* before his Fall, and another made with him after it, which is conceiv'd the Covenant of Redemption. The firſt of theſe, Dr. *Hammond* impartially calls a Covenant ſuppos'd to be made; he does not attempt any Evidence for it: But in the Preface to the *Whole Duty of Man*, a Book almoſt in every body's Hand, and in general, a very excellent Work, this is deliver'd more authoritatively, tho' with as little Evidence pretended for it. Pract. Cat. *p.* 3.

Who-

Whoever find themſelves at a loſs to conceive Things in this Method, and inclin'd upon that Account to make either melancholick or irreligious Concluſions, may ſafely think of 'em in another, and probably to their Satisfaction. There appears no Occaſion for what's here ſuppos'd, and call'd the Firſt Covenant. God certainly propos'd the Happineſs of Man by his Creation; and Man muſt be oblig'd by his Relation to God, to obey his Will as far as he could know it: And as this Firſt Covenant is needleſs, as well as deſtitute of Evidence; ſo the Second, *i. e.* the Covenant of Redemption, is miſrepreſented in the Parties. Man does not appear to be concern'd as a Party in making it, but as a Third Party, for whoſe Sake 'twas made. Nor could there be any Need of the immediate Conſent of Mankind; Chriſt might ſtipulate with the Father, for Favours to be conferr'd on 'em; and the Father might inſiſt on Duties to be perform'd, in order to thoſe Favours, without their Conſent. God had an incontrollable Right to inſiſt on what Duties he pleas'd, even without thoſe Favours, and therefore he certainly might with 'em; and Chriſt cou'd not want their Conſent to his Part, the ſevere Expiation he was to make for 'em. This Covenant may therefore be conſider'd, as made between the Father and the Son; and Men are by a neceſſary Conſequence

equence oblig'd by it: Chriſt, without their Conſciouſneſs, graciouſly enter'd into it on their Behalf; and though 'tis in their Hands, whether it ſhall obtain all the Ends propos'd by it, or not; yet if they, to whom 'tis reveal'd, defeat it, their Viciouſneſs is highly aggravated; and that aggravated Viciouſneſs may be juſtly puniſh'd in what manner God pleaſes; and therefore, if he thought it, a peculiar Puniſhment might be inſiſted on in the Covenant it ſelf.

Branches of the Chriſtian Covenant of Redemption.

The great Branches of this Covenant on the Part of the Father, were theſe: 1. That he wou'd pardon the Degeneracy of Mankind, and all its neceſſary Conſequences; that he wou'd accept the faithful Services, with all its Imperfections; and, 2. That he wou'd vouchſafe proper Aſſiſtances, in order to it; ſuch Revelations as his Wiſdom ſhou'd judge ſeaſonable, and ſuch internal Influence, as they ſhould appear qualify'd for. Herein is imply'd the Fall of Man.

Its Occaſion.

When God had prepar'd this lower World, and on a particular Review, pronounc'd all parts of it good; he propos'd the Creation of Man in theſe honourable Terms: Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeneſs; nothing was yet created, but ſenſeleſs or brute Nature: A nobler Creature was now propos'd as Lord of all, endued with ſuch faculties as might repreſent his Maker; a Power of Reaſoning, and a natural Capacity

city of continuing for ever. Reaſon and Immortality may deſervedly be called an Image of God; inferior indeed in Man, to what they are in God, as all Images muſt needs be to their live Originals; but ſufficiently perfect, to call thoſe Perfections to mind, which they repreſent. Thus was Man well diſpos'd for the End of his Creation; happily ſettled in an unexceptionable Condition; his Mind ſhining with Rays from the Divinity; his Body undiſturb'd with Infirmities; the World about him abundantly adminiſtring to his entire Satisfaction; and his whole Buſineſs, the Enjoyment of that Satisfaction, and a religious Preparation for the Conſummation of his Happineſs, his Tranſlation to Heaven, without the Anguiſh of Diſtempers, or any of the uſual Agonies of Death; and probably, as St. *Paul* was taken up into the Third Heavens, all Rapture and Extacy beyond Expreſſion. Such was Man in his original Perfection, in his Maker's Image; and if the Sight of a dead Friend affect us with Melancholly and Compaſſion, with what Affection muſt we look on Man, when the Image of God's defac'd; when every Feature in it, is either diſtorted or mortify'd? Such was the Effect of his Fall from the Regularity and Perfection of his Nature. This, as 'twas attended with many Aggravations, provok'd his Maker; and as 'twas followed by many

The Fall.

Diſeaſes, both natural and ſpiritual, it weaken'd and debas'd his original Conſtitution.

Shou'd we ſuppoſe him ſo well diſpos'd as to endeavour it, what Method cou'd he take to recover his firſt Eſtate? What Satisfaction cou'd he make his offended God? What Antidote cou'd he find for that Poiſon that had infected his whole Body? What Influence cou'd he implore, to correct the Diſorders of his Soul? What ſupernatural Light, to diſperſe its Darkneſs and Confuſion? Had he been entirely thrown off by God, 'tis not probable he wou'd have thought of any ſuch Means of Recovery. He had in all likelihood proceeded as the fallen Angels did; he had their Example before him, and wou'd not have wanted their Perſuaſions to follow it; and, had he followed it, he had like them, continually accumulated Wickedneſs and Miſery: But God was pleaſed to provide a gracious Method to reſtore him to Favour, to Happineſs, to Perfection. Human Souls cou'd not have been miſs'd in Heaven; there cou'd have been no Deficiency in the Glories of their Creator, had they been ſuffered to ſink into Vice and Miſery univerſally: But the ſame Goodneſs that created 'em, endeavoured their Recovery by all proper Means, all that were conſiſtent with God's Nature and with theirs. Had God granted no ſuch Covenant, had he made no future Reve- *The Effects of it.*

Revelations, had he eſtabliſh'd no Order of Religion in the World, had he left it to the Follies of degenerate Men, and the malicious Practices of Devils, the Bodies of all Mankind had been loſt in the Grave, undiſtinguiſh'd from common Dirt; and their Souls overwhelm'd with vicious Habits, muſt have been miſerable in both Worlds; abandon'd to all the Confuſion and Miſery, which their own Vices and the Malice of Devils cou'd bring on 'em. This ſad Condition of the Soul is not particularly mention'd in the Hiſtory of the Fall, but only Mortality: The Deſtruction of the Body, was the Puniſhment threatned; the Soul being created to continue for ever, muſt naturally expect to be for ever unhappy, if it incurr'd the Diſpleaſure of its Maker. But the Particulars of that Unhappineſs are not inſiſted on; becauſe, God had again taken Man under his Care and Protection; he had long eſtabliſh'd his Covenant of Grace, when that Hiſtory was writ.

The Effects of this Covenant.

By this Covenant, our Mediator became our Wiſdom, our Righteouſneſs, our Sanctification, and our Redemption; through him we were to be inſtructed in all neceſſary Knowledge, to be graciouſly accepted by God as Juſt and Innocent, notwithſtanding our Imperfections; to be ſpiritualiz'd, reform'd, renew'd after God in true Holineſs, and to be reſtor'd to Liberty, deliver'd from the

he Dominion of Sin and Death; our Body was to riſe from the Grave, Incorruptible, Glorious, Powerful and Spiritual; our Soul o be delivered from Slavery, both natural nd ſpiritual; the malignant Influence of icious Habits, and the inſupportable Tyranny of Devils.

Sanctions of it.

The Conſequence of this Covenant, was he Eſtabliſhment of proper Sanctions. This he Chriſtian Diſpenſation has deliver'd iſtinctly and fully; it hath brought Life and mmortality to Light, and it has made plain he Terrors of the Lord. This Immortal ife ſignifies moſt probably that glorious tate of Happineſs which God has prepar'd or the Righteous; not meerly the Exiſtence f the Soul in a future State, which, till ter the Captivity, was never queſtion'd mong the *Jews*, and then only by the *adduces*, a ſmall lewd Sect: And 'twas ery rationally aſſerted among the Heathens, his is emphatically Life, not mere Being.

Accordingly, that miſerable State oppos'd it as the Terror of the Lord, is frequently ll'd Death; not ceaſing to be, but the oſs of all the proper Ends of Being. As vicious, impious Converſation, is call'd ing dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, and the onverſion of ſuch Perſons, a ſecond Birth; the Perfection of the Soul in Heaven, eminently call'd Life; and the Deſtruction all its Hopes of Happineſs in Hell, is in the

the like Eminence call'd Death. When we have deſtroy'd all the good Effects of Life, ſo that we can't enjoy the Powers and Faculties of our Nature; when all is turn'd into Pain, Anguiſh and Confuſion, and muſt for ever ſo continue, this is in a ſad Senſe a ſecond Death. The other World is laid open to our View, 'tis expreſly declar'd, that all vicious Souls ſhall be miſerable, and all that are faithful, pious and virtuous, happy in it. The Degrees of this Happineſs and Miſery, are repreſented in the ſtrongeſt Terms: Thoſe things that affect us at preſent in the moſt paſſionate Manner, with the moſt ſenſible Impreſſions of Good and Evil, are referr'd to as the Pictures of 'em: And at the ſame time as Pictures only; as wanting all that Life and Subſtance, ſo compleat in their Originals.

Had Mankind been univerſally Virtuous in this World, they had doubtleſs been happy in the other; had they been thrown off by God, and become univerſally wicked, they had as certainly been miſerable: But tho the Habits of their own Minds, are ſtill the Foundation both of Heaven and Hell; yet in Conſequence of a poſitive Covenant, there ſeems to have been inſtituted a poſitive Addition, both of Happineſs and Miſery ſuch as peculiarly adapted to a Body, which without the Reſurrection, which is one

Part

art of that Covenant, cou'd have had no
ubject ſo proper as this Body.

Two things may uſefully be obſerv'd con- *When this Covenant was made.*
erning this Covenant; the Time when it
as made, and the Extent of it.

As to the Time, St *Paul* tells us, *Eternal* Tit. 1. 2.
fe was promis'd by God, before the world
egan, *i. e.* when our firſt Parents were
one in it, when the firſt Generation of
lankind was not begun, when they who
ere to ſuffer by the Fall, were yet unborn.
he ſame Apoſtle declares, That God's Pur- 2 Tim.
oſe and Grace was given us in Chriſt Jeſus, 1. 9.
efore the World began, *i. e.* in the Begin-
ing of the Ages, and was made manifeſt
y his Appearance in the Fleſh. St. *Peter* 1 Pet.
eclares Chriſt, *foreordain'd before the foun-* 1. 20.
ation of the world, and in theſe laſt days
anifeſt for us. Before the Foundation of
e World, is here probably to be under-
ood, to deſcribe that Time which paſs'd
ter the Fall, and before the mortal Race to
ring from *Adam* was begun. The World
familiarly us'd in Scripture, to ſignify its
habitants; and Καταβολὴ, the Word here
'd for Foundation, is directly apply'd,
eb. 11. 11. to human Conception. This
uſt follow likewiſe from the many Texts
the New Teſtament, that inſiſt on Chriſt's
ove in dying for us: Had God laid it on
m as an abſolute Obligation, it had been
ere Duty or Neceſſity, not Love to us.

And if this Conſent was neceſſary, it muſt be given at the firſt Eſtabliſhment of this gracious Diſpenſation. If we ſuppoſe God to form this Purpoſe in his own Mind, and then promiſe it only by way of Prediction, this binds Chriſt to an indiſpenſable Neceſſity of bearing this Character; but this is inconſiſtent with the whole Tenor of the Goſpel. It muſt therefore be allowed, that Chriſt had actually conſented and ſettled this Method for the Recovery of Mankind, when the firſt Notice was publiſh'd of it; and the firſt Notice on Record, is in *Gen.* 3. 15. and this in ſome meaſure inculcated in all future Revelations, till it was at laſt viſibly accompliſh'd on the Croſs. Tho' the Learning of the *Jews*, which was uſually employ'd in raiſing Fables from the Truths of Scripture, has from this given us a Dialogue between God the Father and Chriſt, before all Creation, and deliver'd it down as the Chriſtian Covenant of Redemption; 'tis however an evident and important Truth that this was made ſoon after the Fall, tho' they have trifled with it.

Its Extent. The laſt thing to be obſerv'd, is the Extent of it; which may appear both as to Perſons and Things, from St *Paul's* Fifth Chapter to the *Romans*, in the Twelfth Verſe. The Influence of Chriſt's Obedience in this Diſpenſation, appears exactly correſpondent to *Adam's* Tranſgreſſion, as far as

Rom. 5. v. 12.

hat went: But it hath two great Advanta-
ges. 1. *Adam* brought Mortality upon us, *v.* 15.
by gratifying his own vicious Inclinations; 16.
Christ had no personal Interest, in recove- 17.
ing our Nature from the Bonds of that
Mortality. 2. That Mortality was inflicted
or one single Sin; Christ procur'd our Par-
on, not for that only, but for the many
thers occasion'd by it. Had the first
ransgression been pardon'd, the Sins of
hich all Men wou'd have been guilty,
ight justly have brought on 'em God's
engeance: Had Christ therefore done no
ore for us, we might have perished in his
rms. But all, except obstinate Presumpti-
ns, habitual Vices, are under the Shadow
his Wings, within the Compass of his
ross, sprinkled with his Blood, and thereby
otected from the irresistible Destroyer,
e Vengeance of God.

Nor was this Favour purchased for a few *Universal.*
eculiar Favourites, as appears from the
welfth Verse: 'Twas as universal as the
fluence of *Adam's* Sin. As that had no 1 Tim.
iminal Consent from his Posterity, yet 2. 6.
born; so Christ's Merits originally con-
er'd, were absolute; no personal Con-
tions but what concern'd himself, were
nex'd to 'em. But then 'tis here distinctly
be observ'd, that this immediate absolute
fect of 'em, was only the Restoration of
ankind to a Capacity of Life and Im-

mortality; all became capable thro' him, by discharging their respective Duties. These Duties may differ, as well as God's Dispensations; but God never requires Impossibilities, nor does he impute to us our Incapacities; he does not charge us with the want of Blessings, as criminal, except we have destroy'd 'em by our Vices. I think I need insist only on one plain Authority for this; which is contain'd in these Words, *Then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.* This supposes, as the Basis of the Argument, that Christ's Merits comprehended Mankind from the Beginning; that the Covenant was made in the Infancy of the World; but that 'twas sufficient if he appear'd in the End of it, in the last Age, to perform his Part as a Sacrifice for Sin: Unless he attoned for the former Ages, what necessity cou'd there be for his suffering often. The Apostle is here representing the Dignity of Christ, as our Priest, above the High-Priest under the Law: This he does, by urging, that the High-Priest atton'd every Year; Christ but once: This being referr'd to the past Ages, plainly supposes that he atton'd for 'em by that one Oblation. But to this may be added St. *Paul's* Words, *Rom.* 5. 18. *As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of Life.*

Heb. 9. 25, 26.

The Apoſtle here places the Grace receiv'd in Chriſt, in direct Oppoſition to the Judgment incurr'd in *Adam*, and declares 'em both univerſal. Mortality was the Portion of all the Sons of *Adam*; and there being nothing in the Parts of a human Body, that naturally inclines 'em to reunite after a Diſſolution, the Bodies of all Men had been abſolutely loſt, but Chriſt procur'd the Favour of their Reſtoration by Omnipotence: And accordingly, when their Minds were corrupted and alienated from God, they had no Means of recovering their Innocence and Perfection, and conſequently no way of reconciling themſelves to God, but muſt have continued under his Diſpleaſure, and the Influence of their Corruptions; but Chriſt made Satisfaction to the Righteouſneſs of God for their Imperfections, and the Irregularities occaſion'd by 'em; and hereby gain'd their Souls to a Capacity of performing what God requir'd, and recommending themſelves by ſuch Performance to his Favour. He reſtor'd neither Soul nor Body to its Perfection in this World. The Body is ſtill ſubject to various Diſeaſes, the Soul to many ſpiritual Infirmities: But theſe are tolerable Afflictions, ſince the main Point, our eternal Happineſs, is ſecur'd in the Perfection of both. Now as it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that the Condemnation conſequent upon *Adam*'s Tranſgreſſion, affected none

of his Poſterity till the Incarnation of Chriſt; ſo it muſt be impoſſible likewiſe to conclude, that the Juſtification conſequent on the Covenant of Redemption commenc'd at that Time: And therefore all condemn'd in *Adam*, and all juſtify'd in Chriſt, being Terms of the ſame Latitude, and directly oppos'd to each other, they muſt both contain the whole Race. Such was the original Covenant with the Father.

And great is the Comfort of knowing, that the Son's Part has been exactly fulfill'd; and 'tis the great Buſineſs of the New Teſtament to aſſure of this, and to direct us to a proper Conduct in Conſequence of it.

The Son's Part. As the firſt Article of Natural Faith is the Being of a Creator, ſo the firſt of Reveal'd is the Being of a Redeemer. That a Mediator has been provided for the Recovery of Mankind from their Apoſtacy and Mortality, and that Chriſt was this Mediator, *i. e.* the Meſſiah; this is the main Principle of the Goſpel Diſpenſation. As we are oblig'd not to give God's Honour to another, not to worſhip any but the true God; ſo are we equally concern'd to fix on the true Redeemer, to ſuffer nothing to alienate our Faith; *i. e.* We muſt believe Jeſus to be the true Meſſiah; and when we have found the Meſſiah, then we are to fill up the Meaſure of our Faith. But many Particulars of his Life and Death, his Reſurrection

rrection and Aſcenſion, though neceſſary
be believ'd, are not ſo properly to be re-
uted Parts of the Chriſtian Revelation, as
oncurrent Proofs of this Character.

But it has ſometimes been ſuppos'd, that
bare Conſent to this Title is Faith enough.
ut ſure it muſt be neceſſary to underſtand
hat it contains: To believe him the true
eſſiah, and not know what's meant by that
haracter: To believe him the Anointed of
od, and not apprehend what he was
ointed to; this ſeems too much like be-
ving as the Church believes, implicitly,
ithout enquiring what that is: A Cloak
nly for Ignorance and Infidelity. 'Tis
erefore very neceſſary to believe Particu-
rs; which are properly enough divided
o theſe three Capacities, with reſpect to
e Evangelical Diſpenſation; our Prophet,
r Prieſt, and our King. If we look back
to the former Ages, we ſhall find Chriſt
as not unactive in them; we have good
eaſon to aſſert, he acted as a Patron or
uardian of the Religious Part of Mankind.

Part of his Character, which does not
roperly come under any one of theſe
hree; but theſe however are not defective,
ecauſe they are to be conſider'd as com-
encing after the Incarnation.

Chriſt as Prophet.

While we conſider Chriſt as Prophet, we
onſider his Declarations as made in the
ame of God. He expreſsly declares, *The* John 14. 10.

words that I ſpeak unto you, I ſpeak not of my ſelf: And the Baptiſt declares of him, *He whom God hath ſent, ſpeaketh the words of God.* Such are all Predictions, as well as all Duties and their Sanctions. As he was foretold by *Moſes* and all the Prophets, to diſpoſe the World to receive him when he ſhould appear in Perſon; tho' the moſt important Parts of his Character remain'd myſterious; ſo the great Buſineſs of his own Prophetick Office was to introduce a Dependance on him, in thoſe Parts of his Character that were yet to be accompliſh'd: And the Doctrines deliver'd by him for this End, were deliver'd in ſuch Terms, that they were likewiſe reſerv'd to be explain'd; partly by their actual Accompliſhments, and partly by the Spirit: A Spiritual Redemption, and a Spiritual Kingdom, were Myſteries to the laſt, even to his own Apoſtles.

Thus far the Life of Chriſt was the ſame to the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, that the Old Prophets were to the Life of Chriſt; ſuch a Repreſentation, as would make Mens Hearts glow with a general Expectation of great Things, and in Time ſerve as Proofs of 'em. As a ſerious Conformity to Natural Religion, is a very good Advance towards an humble Submiſſion to any Degrees of Revelation; ſo the Doctrines of Chriſt, propos'd in the Name of God on-

y, were a proper Foundation for a Chri-
tian Church. If the Law was a School-
naſter to bring Men to Chriſt; much more
night the Goſpel, tho' prophetically and
bſcurely preach'd.

Here we may, with great Juſtice, adore God's Wiſdom, in the ſeveral Steps and dvances it made, in order to ſum up all hings in Chriſt; like ſo many Propoſitions in the moſt regular and ſtrict Reaſoning, to come at one general, comprehenve Concluſion. He was promis'd ſoon afer the Fall of Man; typify'd in Sacrifices om the firſt Generation; recogniz'd to *Abraham*, and determin'd to his Poſterity. is Memory was preſerv'd by the Law, and l the Prophets. Then came *John*, to make eady a People prepar'd for him. Then he mſelf preach'd the Goſpel of the Kingom; and when he had explain'd himſelf s far as 'twas proper to do at that Time, e finiſh'd all for which he came into the orld; and then the whole Counſel of od was proclaim'd. *The Wiſdom of this Method.*

The Sacerdotal Character of Chriſt is to e explain'd by the Nature of the Prieſtood under the *Moſaick* Law, with this onſtant Reſtriction; That Chriſt is peculily repreſented by the High-Prieſt only, nd, when compar'd to him, has an emient Superiority; as appears throughout the hole Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*. *Prieſt.*

The

The Two great Branches of that Solemn Office were theſe: To offer up Sacrifice for the People; and, in the Virtue of that Sacrifice, to intercede with God for 'em. Our Faith in Chriſt, therefore, as our Prieſt, is contain'd in theſe Two Articles; 1. That he offer'd up himſelf a Full, Perfect, Sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World: And, 2. That he aſcended into Heaven, to make Interceſſion for us.

We find great Things ſpoken of Chriſt in the New Teſtament, with reſpect to both theſe Sacerdotal Offices. Theſe are the great Points of the Chriſtian Faith. Without theſe, no great Uſe will be made of our Faith in him as our Prophet: *Life and Immortality*, without theſe, will ſcarce amount to *glad tidings of great joy*. This Joy conſiſted in his being born a Saviour; without theſe, he ſinks into a common Prophet: And the Goſpel would be a more melancholick Diſpenſation than the Law; it would leave us without any Sacrifice or Interceſſion for Sin, and, at the ſame Time, oblige us to the ſtricteſt Duties.

King. His Royal Character began immediately after his Aſcenſion. St. *Peter* concludes, in the Second Chapter of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, *Therefore* (*i. e.* by Chriſt's Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, and the Miſſion of the Spirit) *all the houſe of Iſrael might know*

now aſſuredly, that God had made that ſame Jeſus both Lord and Chriſt. This herefore we may reckon the firſt Exerciſe f his Royal Power, ſending this Bleſſed pirit to act as Viceroy upon Earth; and articularly, at that Time, to authorize and ualify his Apoſtles to ſuſtain the Character f his Prime Miniſters, to proclaim his Au-ority to the World, to procure Obedi-nce to his Laws, to increaſe the Number f his Subjects, and diffuſe the Bleſſings of s Government.

All Parts of the New Teſtament, there-re, are to be conſider'd as dictated by him; the Precepts of it are the Laws of his ingdom, and, as ſuch, the Subjects of our ith and Practice.

Where particular Caſes and Circumſtan-s are the immediate Subjects, there the ſpir'd Speakers, or Writers, are to be un-rſtood as applying ſome General Law; d that General Law is there dictated to , tho', thro' the Variety of our Circum-nces, we are not concern'd in this parti-lar Application. For the ſame Reaſon, hatever we apprehend to be true, as a nſequence from what they have ſaid or it, muſt have the ſame Authority. We y poſſibly be miſtaken in ſuch Caſes; we y conclude as a Conſequence, what may t truly follow from their Doctrines; we ay ſuppoſe their Determinations made on

ſome

ſome General Laws, on which they were not made. So we may likewiſe miſtake their direct and expreſs Precepts: But ſtill 'tis unexceptionably true, that whatever we apprehend to have been their Principles and Doctrines, muſt be the Rule of our Faith and Practice. By this Submiſſion to his Authority, Men become his Subjects: This was the Creation of the Chriſtian World, as 'twas his Kingdom.

But as Chriſt is not to be conſider'd as abſolutely independent of the Father; as if the Father were unconcern'd, as the ancient *Epicures* conceiv'd, *'Tis plain he is excepted, which did put all things under him*; ſo likewiſe the Spirit is to be conſider'd, as acting ſubordinately to Chriſt. He is himſelf *Head over all things to the Church*: He exerciſes an Influence in it, both as to particular Members and the whole Body, that anſwers to Providence in the Natural World. He diſpoſes the various Revolutions in the Condition of his Church; ſubjecting it ſometimes to Clouds and Storms, Perſecutions and Corruptions; which are to be conſider'd as the Invaſions of *principalities and powers, ſpiritual wickedneſſes in high places*, under *the prince of the power of the air, the father of lies and rebellion*; ſometimes diſpelling theſe Clouds, diſperſing theſe Storms; as, when on Earth, he *cur'd diſeaſes*, and made *the winds and the ſeas obey*

1 Cor. 15. 27.

obey him. The moſt remarkable of theſe Diſpenſations, yet to be accompliſh'd, are, the bringing in *the fulneſs of the Gentiles,* Rom. 11. the Univerſal Converſion of the *Jews,* and 25, 26. the conſuming of *the man of ſin, the ſon* 2 Theſſ. *of perdition, whom the Lord ſhall conſume* 1. *with the ſpirit of his mouth, and deſtroy with the brightneſs of his coming.* Then ſhall commence the laſt great Period of his Reign; the ſolemn Judgment of Mankind: In order to which, he ſhall command all Parts of the World to give up their Dead, the laſt Inſtance of his Government upon Earth; the Deſtruction of his laſt Enemy, and the Introduction to the final Determination of all Mankind to their everlaſting Settlement.

From theſe great Heads of Faith, we muſt *His Laws.* acknowledge an indiſpenſible Obligation to obſerve his Laws, how grievous ſoever. But when we conſult the New Teſtament, we ſhall find 'em moſt reaſonable and neceſſary. They are either arbitrary Inſtitutions, or ſuch as are founded on Eternal Reaſon. The arbitrary Inſtitutions are but two; Baptiſm, and the Lord's Supper: The one a ſolemn Form of ſwearing Allegiance to him, and being admitted Members of his Church; the other, a ſolemn Repreſentation of his Sufferings for us, an Exerciſe of our Piety and Gratitude. The Moral, Eternal Duties are ſo ſtated, as to *fulfil the Law*

and

and the Prophets; to regulate all Parts of Nature, and ſpiritualize the Affections of Mankind.

Had Chriſt, as a Prophet, only propos'd theſe, they would have been ſufficiently recommended to us; but they have been reinforc'd with the Majeſty and Importance of his Royal Character, and urg'd with all the Endearments of his Sacerdotal: The Heart that can now withſtand 'em, is invincibly corrupt.

Such is the General State of Chriſtianity, with reſpect to the Son. Perhaps, ſome may chuſe to conſider him only as Prieſt and King; the Sacerdotal Office including Inſtructions as well as Sacrifices; and the Royal Character being capable of comprehending his Influence in the World, ever ſince the Covenant was eſtabliſh'd; and not inconſiſtent with the Sacerdotal, but poſſibly repreſented as united with it; where Chriſt is ſaid to be *a Prieſt for ever after the Order of Melchiſedech*; *i. e.* both Prieſt and King at the ſame Time. But however, the Doctrines conſequent from his Character, are the ſame both ways.

The Holy Ghoſt.

The Holy Ghoſt, the Third Perſon in the Bleſſed Trinity, and the Third Head or Subject of our Faith, is to be conſider'd both in its publick and private Influence.

Many

Many eminent Inſtances of its publick Influence are recorded in plain Facts: Its private is promis'd, not abſolutely, but ſo as to depend on Mens Diſpoſitions. As the publick was withdrawn, when 'twas obſtinately neglected, ſo is the private likewiſe. 'Tis a never failing Rule in all Parts of Nature, That *God does nothing in vain.* *Its Publick Character.*

When Chriſt convers'd on Earth, the ſhort Time he ſpent in his Publick Miniſtry, and the Caution he was oblig'd to uſe, and the Obſcurity which clouded the true Meaning of his Diſcourſes, occaſion'd by that Caution; theſe Things oblig'd him to leave the Evangelical Doctrine very imperfectly reveal'd. He did little more than put in a Claim to his Kingdom, and make that Claim good by Miracles, and prepare Men to ſubmit to it. The Spirit, therefore, after his Aſcenſion, had a moſt important Office, a Province of the laſt Conſequence. This Spirit of Chriſt was to the New World, then deſign'd, the ſame that the Spirit of God was at firſt to the Old, *moving upon the face of the waters.* All before was dark and confus'd; that enlighten'd and regulated the whole. Chriſt, in his Life-time, was forc'd to be reſerv'd: The Iniquity of the Times oblig'd him to expreſs himſelf in general and obſcure Terms; he could not otherwiſe have finiſh'd the Work his Father enjoin'd him. The full Eſtabliſhment of Chri-

Chriſtianity, the plain Declaration of God's Counſels with reſpect to Mankind, and the rational Conviction that ſhould make 'em heartily ſubmit to 'em; this was reſerv'd as the Work of that Bleſſed Spirit.

Its Influence. Its Influence was, 1. The Recovery, in the Memory of the Apoſtles, of all that the Lord had diſcours'd to 'em, and repreſenting its true Meaning diſtinctly. 2. This Influence enabled them to perform ſuch Works as might command the Reverence of Spectators, and diſpoſe 'em to be convinc'd by the full Evidence they gave for the Truth of their Doctrines: And this Influence, divided into many miraculous Gifts, was variouſly communicated to great Numbers of the Primitive Diſciples.

This Spirit is call'd *the Promiſe of the Father*; in all probability, as having been originally promis'd in the Covenant of Redemption, and having all along enlighten'd the Prophets. It had long been withdrawn from the *Jews* at Chriſt's Incarnation, and was at that Time ſolemnly return'd, to eſtabliſh his Kingdom. And ſuch was its Demonſtration, ſuch its Power, 'twas Conviction to all unprejudic'd Perſons, and viſible Confuſion to its Enemies. 'Tis hard to ſay, which is more difficult to account for; that ſo many ſhould be converted without ſuppoſing this Demonſtration, and this Power; or that, ſuppoſing both, ſo many ſhould

hould reſiſt it, and remain unconverted. But the Fact is certain, and inveterate Habits of Vice are almoſt invincible; however, this Influence was continu'd in the Church for ſeveral Centuries. And when twas ſuperſeded, the Doctrines of Chriſtianity being ſufficiently declar'd, atteſted and recorded; then the Spirit influenc'd the Hearts of private Chriſtians in a more compos'd, more retir'd way; and continues to aſſiſt ſincere Souls, tho' unobſerv'd, in all Parts of their Chriſtian Character. *Its Private.*

It aſſiſts, enlightens, purifies their Underſtanding; by the Help of that, they enter farther into the Things that be of God, han they cou'd otherwiſe do. It ſtrengthens our Inclinations to ſuch Things; it makes uch Impreſſions on our Hearts, as increaſe our Concern for 'em; it overcomes that Vantonneſs and Indifference, that Lukevarmneſs and Careleſneſs, that's apt to betray us to our Senſes; it ſanctifies the Will, nd protects it from the Intrigues of Satan. And in a Mind that's governable, it regulates nd allays the Violence of the Paſſions, hoſe Tempeſts, that do ſo much Miſchief in he World; it calms the Soul, and diſpoſes to conſider ſeriouſly the true Nature of Things, the preſent State of 'em, and their ertain Conſequences; and this prevents all hoſe blind Prejudicies that hinder Religion *Its Effects.*

from influencing the Lives of Men, and keeps Chriſt's Blood from being refuſe.

Whenever the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs undertake for any End, we can't queſtion, but they provide for all neceſſary Means: And ſince Aſſiſtance from the Supreme Mind may reaſonably be ſuppos'd neceſſary to all Orders and States of Rational Creatures, eſpecially to Mankind under the Confuſion of degenerate Nature, we may conclude this Aſſiſtance was as univerſal as our Redemption it ſelf. Accordingly the Spirit, as well as Eternal Life, is ſaid to be promis'd. There is no Reaſon to queſtion, but the Promiſe of both bears the ſame Date, and is of equal Latitude in diſpenſing the various Means to this great End: The Father kept the Times, and Seaſons, and Degrees in his own Power.

The publick Influence of this Spirit is recorded, as influencing *Noah* and all the Prophets: But yet an eminent Demonſtration and Power was deputed, after Chriſt's Aſcenſion, to propagate the Goſpel; when it might be almoſt literally ſaid, that all the Lord's People were Prophets.

Accordingly, its private Influence has never been wanting to any Generation of Mankind. As God made of one Blood all Nations of Men, that they ſhould ſeek him; ſo he gave all ſuch Direction as was neceſſary. But the New Teſtament plainly deſcribes

cribes a ſingular Portion of this Spirit, as he great Bleſſing of the Goſpel, the glori-us Privilege of the Chriſtian Baptiſm; for vhich Reaſon 'tis call'd the Spirit of Chriſt. But as among thoſe Heathens, whoſe Wri-ings and Manners have been deliver'd down o us, there have been ſome who declar'd ome Aſſiſtance from the Divine Mind, a atural Expectation, and thought no Man ould make any great Advances without it; o we may reaſonably conclude, there are ome ſerious, wiſe, good Men among all Nations, who have the ſame Sentiments, nd make ſuitable Addreſſes to the Almighty, ho' in the midſt of deplorable Superſtitions: And had I no other Authority for their Suc-eſs, but *Luke* 11. 13. I ſhould not dare ronounce it improbable. I know thoſe Words are ſometimes confin'd to Chriſtians; ut I ſee no Reaſon for ſuch Reſtraint. Our Saviour's Words are a Concluſion from he natural Relation of a Father to the Conduct of God: *If ye being evil, know ow to give good gifts to your children, ow much more ſhall your heavenly Father ive the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* s Prayer is a natural Duty, this Encou-agement given to it, may be juſtly under-tood univerſal. And if any ſhould think o evade this, by interpreting Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ot the Holy Spirit, but an Holy Spirit; vhich I acknowledge not abſurd, under-

ſtanding by it the Mind of the Supplicant; the Conſequence will however be the ſame: For as this Holineſs of Mind is the Gift of God, we can underſtand it given no other way, but by the Influence of his Spirit.

I'll mention one Text more, in which the Heathens are expreſly ſpoke of. When St. *Paul* had in general indicted 'em of unnatural Apoſtacy from God, in the Firſt Chapter to the *Romans*, he tells us, V. 24. For that, God gave 'em up to Uncleanneſs, V. 26. He gave 'em up to vile Affections, V. 28. He gave 'em over to a reprobate Mind. From hence I cannot but think it equitable to conclude, that till they had ſo inexcuſably provok'd him, and debauch'd themſelves, they did enjoy all neceſſary Influence from this Father of Spirits; and if ſo, then as many as at any time are properly diſpos'd to make uſe of it, will continue to enjoy it.

The Divinity of all Three.

To theſe Particulars concerning the Father, the Son, and the Bleſſed Spirit, 'tis neceſſary to add a moſt important Doctrine common to all, that is, their Godhead; a Doctrine not peculiarly inſiſted on in any Part of the New Teſtament, but diſpos'd in it like the Soul in the Body, diffus'd thro' the whole, as the Life and Energy of it; but carefully laid as the Foundation of the Chriſtian Life, in the Form of Baptiſm.

Some perhaps may have Sagacity enough to diſtinguiſh and explain upon it, and refine it,

it, till they think themſelves clear of ſuch a Conſequence. But our Saviour, who knew what was in Man, wou'd not have laid ſuch a Snare for his Diſciples; 'twas more than probable, a great Majority wou'd in courſe, worſhip thoſe venerable Names into which they were baptiz'd; nor wou'd they have had Subtilty enough to have diſtinguiſh'd between ſuch Worſhip and Idolatry. This Danger wou'd ſurely not have been made the Introduction to Chriſtianity, a Diſpenſation that expreſſes ſo much concern to deſtroy all the Works of the Devil, but particularly his Worſhip; and as a Barrier againſt all approaches to it, earneſtly cautions us againſt adoring ſuch as by Nature are not Gods; and diſcountenances our applying the leaſt Appearence of it, to the higheſt Orders of Angels.

Had only different Diſpenſations been meant by this Form, how eaſy had it been to have propos'd 'em as ſuch, and not as Perſons? How ſhocking is it, to ſee Two Creatures plac'd in the Throne with their Creator, to receive the Homage of Mankind? But I need not enlarge here, 'tis ſufficient to refer to thoſe Diſcourſes in which this great Point has been ſo copiouſly diſcuſs'd. *Three Perſons.*

Such is the general State of Revelation, and of Chriſtianity in particular. I purpoſely decline all inferior Problems, upon

which the ſeveral Parties of Chriſtians ſo unhappily engage: I ſhall confine my preſent Concern to Chriſtianity itſelf; and great certainly is our Obligation to God's Goodneſs for it.

How many ſoever there may be in the World, who have not ſo much as heard of theſe Things; Heathens yet in Darkneſs, yet in the Region and Shadow of Death: How many ſoever that are taught by the Courſe of their Education, to treat 'em with Indifference, and to prefer to Chriſt a vile Impoſtor, whoſe Kingdom was entirely of this World, and as to him, expir'd with his Breath: How many ſoever have been diſpos'd by the Vices they have engag'd in, to put off theſe Doctrines, as Principles that wou'd torment 'em before their Time; And how many ſoever are indeed ſo unhappy, as not to ſee the Connexion of one Part with another, and therefore want the Satisfaction of a full Aſſurance of Faith: Into how ſmall a Room ſoever the various Deformities of human Life may have contracted this Satisfaction, they who do enjoy it, can't be too thankful. Some Souls that are buried in their Bodies, may be unconcern'd; but they that conſider the Condition of their Nature, and the real Moment of the beſt Parts of this World, will glorify God for the Proviſion he hath made for 'em in

in another, and the gracious Advantages indulg'd 'em.

And yet I am ſatisfy'd, but few Parts of this manifold Wiſdom of God, this Πολυποίκιλος Σοφία, have eſcaped great Prejudices, which ſometimes alienate the Hearts of Men, and frequently ſuſpend their Judgments and Affections, and thereby prevent its Force on their Souls. *Prejudices.*

CHAP. IV.

Prejudices againſt ſeveral Parts of Religion conſider'd, particularly concerning the Sufferings of Mankind for the Sin of their firſt Parents.

SOME labour the Deſtruction of the cleareſt Evidence; they deny the Being of thoſe Things, which at the ſame time make 'em tremble. As Diſcontent and Ill-nature make ſome People wretched in ſpight of Providence, ſo a reſolute Viciouſneſs makes ſuch Perſons Infidels, in ſpight of Demonſtration, and Brutes, in ſpight of all the Faculties of human Souls. Such receive the moſt rational Admonitions with a ſcornful Neglect, they look on 'em as the Effect of Pride and Prejudice; 'tis a full, effectual *Obſtinate Infidels.*

Anſwer, meerly to call 'em Preaching; they remember the Time when they had ſuch Thoughts themſelves, but having overcome their own Superſtitions, they will not be troubled with thoſe of other Men, but enjoy their Conqueſt.

Suſpending Profeſſors. This is not a proper Place to explain this Character, but for the ſake of others, who may be ſeduced by it, ſome place ſhall be found for it. 'Tis my Ambition at preſent to take off, at leaſt ſome of thoſe Weights which hang upon the Minds of too many, and hinder 'em from riſing to any Eminence in Piety and Virtue. Such as are not Enemies to Religion, frequently ſpeak of its moſt important Principles with ſo much Caution, and ſometimes Levity, that 'tis plain they have not Poſſeſſion of their Hearts; and 'tis no wonder if ſuch Perſons ſatisfy themſelves with ſome treacherous Schemes of Practice, and thus maintain throughout their Lives a ſort of Neutrality. Matters of Faith fluctuate in their Heads undetermin'd, and they are ſatisfy'd with avoiding groſs Vices: They believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, but ſcarce ever ſettle their Souls in any rational Dependance on 'em; continual Suſpicions and Jealouſies keep 'em at ſome Diſtance; the ſeveral Extravagancies of contending Parties keep 'em in Suſpence; they conclude it Prudence, not to be poſitive in the moſt neceſſary Articles

ticles of Faith, and are concern'd only to provide ſome Refuge, ſome Retreat, ſome Shelter from the Vengeance of Heaven. Men are not to be blamed for doubting, but for continuing under their Doubts; for ſuffering 'em to lie in their Breaſts as ſo many Exceptions to Religion; like private Reſentments and Jealouſies between Friends, continually cooling and alienating their Affections: Whereas, were they ingenuouſly produced, and expoſtulated, they might be explain'd to their Satisfaction, and ſettle an entire Confidence.

Original Sin.

The Foundation of Chriſtianity, the Occaſion of the Chriſtian Covenant, Man's firſt Tranſgreſſion, and God's Vengeance on it, is too commonly treated in this manner. The moſt modeſt among ſuch contented Scepticks, favour it only with their Silence; others ſpeak of it with a conſcious Baſhfulneſs, as if they were ſenſible of ſome Weakneſs in profeſſing it; and too many refer to it, as a Poetick Fable, and ſhow ſome Complacency in their Countenance, upon the moſt melancholick Subject in Nature.

Before I undertake any Repreſentations of my own Thoughts, upon ſuch Parts of Chriſtianity as are frequently ſuppos'd exceptionable, I muſt beg, that the Arrogance of declaring againſt all other Solutions, may not be imputed to me: I do not here ſuppoſe all others falſe, but only not ſatisfactory to the Perſons for whom I am

here

here concern'd. I had much rather any Man ſhou'd be converted to Chriſtianity, or, which is the ſame thing, to a hearty Reſignation to its Authority, by miſtaking weaker Arguments for ſtronger, than continue either Infidel or Supine, by miſtaking ſtronger Arguments for weak ones. There may be many different Ways of thinking upon the ſame original Truth; and every one of them may lead thoſe who tread 'em back again, to the ſame Principle; but ſeveral Perſons may prefer one to another, for incidental Reaſons; and ſome perhaps wou'd not have attempted to proceed to the Principle itſelf, had not ſome Way been ſhewn 'em, that appear'd to them more agreeable than others; and they who are brought to it by weak Repreſentations, recommended by their preſent Apprehenſion, may afterwards be ſettled in it by ſtrong ones of their own.

There have certainly been ſome Schemes or Hypotheſes contriv'd by particular Perſons, that have given great Advantages to the wanton Enemies of Religion, and laid many unneceſſary Difficulties, in the way of ſincere Searchers after Truth. As to this particular, Original Sin, I wou'd firſt recommend the Reading of the Ninth Article of the Church upon this Subject; the full Senſe of which I conceive is here maintain'd, without imputing any arbitrary Hardſhips to God.

As

As the Effects compoſe all the Miſery that mortal Weakneſs can ſuffer, ſo the Cauſe contains as much virulent Iniquity as can be imagined in one Action. Whatever Reaſon there might be for the Almighty's interpoſing as to *Adam*'s Conduct in Paradiſe, 'tis plain he did not ſolemnly exert his Authority, and laid a Prohibition on one particular Tree: Many other Reaſons there might be for this; but ſuppoſing it only a Subject of Probation, what can excuſe the Violation of ſo plain, ſo eaſy a Command? If 'twas a matter of no great Moment in itſelf, 'twas for that Reaſon the more eaſy to obey; and being diſobey'd at a Time when the ſtrongeſt Obligations ſhou'd have been freſh in their Minds, and in a Place ſo often viſited by the Majeſty of Heaven, 'twas aggravated with the utmoſt Ingratitude and Preſumption. But the Weight of the Crime, enough to cruſh more than one Species of Creatures, lies in preferring the Authority of the Devil to that of their Maker. 'Tis plain, they were prevail'd on to impute Envy and Falſehood to God, and hearken to the Advice of the Devil, as the moſt friendly Truth; they concluded this Tree a Treaſure of Happineſs reſerv'd by God, and invidiouſly deny'd 'em; they were not contented with their Condition; they inſolently attempted to advance it, in Defiance of Heaven; they conceiv'd God had impos'd on them, and that

Its Heinouſneſs.

the

the Secret was betray'd by this kind Informer.

After their having conſented to ſuch Imputations upon God, nothing can be wonder'd at, nothing ſo ſtrange as to make it worth many Words to account for it, but the Circumſtance which too many affect to be ſurpriz'd at. The Tempter's appearing as a Serpent, ought in Reaſon to be allowed very probable, in the View that hath been given of it: A particular Species, called Seraphims, ſhining like Fire as they flew in the Air, from whence the higheſt Orders of Angels are ſo called, who appeared in ſuch Luſtre. From whence it proceeded, that Serpents were worſhipp'd in ſo many Places: Such a Serpent *Eve* might ſuppoſe an Angel, one of thoſe that compos'd the Shechinah, to which ſhe was no Stranger. This is the Account of Learned and Judicious Men; and I'll preſume to mention here a Conjecture of my own, which if true, is a good Support to it. St. *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. mentions the Serpent's beguiling *Eve* by his Subtilty: This Subtilty, from the Subject to which 'tis apply'd as a Similitude, falſe Apoſtles, does not ſeem to conſiſt in crafty Arguments, but rather ſome falſe Appearance; ſuch transform'd themſelves into the Apoſtles of Chriſt, they put on the Figures, or outward Appearance of ſuch; and in the 14th Ver. the Reference is continu'd: No marvel,

Num. 21. 6. Iſaiah 30. 6.

Luke 10. 19.

for Satan himſelf is *transform'd into an Angel of Light.* If this Transformation be the Subtilty, the Πανουργία of the Third Verſe, we have St. *Paul's* Authority to confirm this Account.

But not to inſiſt on a Circumſtance: 'Tis plain, they comply'd with the Inſinuations of this Tempter, whatever they thought him. The Charge herein imply'd againſt God is the ſame; and 'tis ſuch as ſeems inconſiſtent with any Reverence for him, any Dependance on him, any Worſhip or Submiſſion but what was extorted by Fear. And what a dreadful State of Mind is this! Who can think it ſtrange, that ſuch Creatures ſhould be caſt off by their Maker; left to the Conſequences of their own Wickedneſſes and Corruptions; no longer favour'd with Meſſages from Heaven, aſſiſted with no Revelations, no Admonitions from God; referr'd to that Counſellor, whom they had preferr'd to him? And in this Caſe, what could be expected, but their becoming (in Time) as wicked and miſerable as the fallen Angels themſelves; uniting in an impious Converſation with thoſe Numbers of malicious Spirits, that ſtill infeſt this lower World, and imitating their obdurate Averſion to God, and to all Means of being reform'd or reconcil'd? *Its Influence.*

What Appearance of Abſurdity is there in all this? What can be added to the Crime? *The Baſeneſs of Diſtruſt.*

All

All Things conſider'd, I think we may ſafely ſay, no Man alive is now capable of committing one equal to it. Diſtruſt, when injuriouſly plac'd, is always grievous to Men, and uſually reſented as full of the fouleſt Imputations: And 'tis more grievous, and more reſented, in Proportion to the Sincerity of the Perſon ſuſpected, and to the Obligations of the Perſon that ſuſpects him. The moſt generous and moſt friendly Minds are moſt deeply wounded by it; and thoſe Wounds ſmart moſt, that have been given by thoſe Hands that have been fill'd with their Favours. Diſtruſt, therefore, in the Breaſt of Man, with reſpect to God, tho' it can't make him uneaſy, is loaded with all poſſible Aggravations. The Devil's Succeſs in this Inſtance, ſeems to have encourag'd him to attack Chriſt the ſame way; a Diſtruſt of God being the main Crime he propos'd to tempt him to, in the Wilderneſs: Could he have prevail'd, he might expect to diſqualify him for the Work he came about. He purſued the ſame End afterwards, with greater Succeſs, on the Deſcent of the Bleſſed Spirit: And what is truly to be underſtood by Blaſphemy againſt that Spirit, is the only Inſtance of Wickedneſs, copy'd from this Original, that comes near it.

The Puniſhment on the Body. On the other hand; What unnatural Severity is there in the Puniſhment? 'Tis true,

true, the Offenders forfeited many Favours deſign'd them. Human Bodies, in their Original Conſtitution, were probably ſuch, that they muſt wear out; they muſt naturally diſſolve: Thoſe Parts, upon which the Nouriſhment of the whole depended, muſt in Time fail; and when they did, the whole muſt droop, for want of its uſual Suſtenance. What we commonly call Nouriſhment, is not ſo in it ſelf; it muſt be made ſo by the Veſſels of the Body, appointed for that Purpoſe: As theſe wear, Nature fails; and 'tis not eaſy to conceive any Material Compoſition, that will of it ſelf laſt for ever. But ſuch was God's gracious Diſpoſition for their Happineſs, they may be conceiv'd preſerv'd in their Vigor, in their Original Perfection, had it not been for this Tranſgreſſion: Their actual Diſpoſition to Mortality commenc'd there. The Means deſign'd by God for their Preſervation, were withdrawn; they were left to all the Inconſiſtencies which their Corruptions and Diſorders introduc'd; and Paradiſe, where was the only Tree of Life, was for ever ſhut againſt them.

The Scriptures have no where explain'd the Nature of this Tree, or of the Tree of Knowledge; we muſt be contented with probable Concluſions from their Names. The Fruit of this Tree was, in all probability, provided to preſerve the Bodies of

Mankind from Decay, to which (being compos'd of Duſt) they muſt be naturally ſubject. Had they continued innocent, and by their Innocence immortal; this Tree (we may ſuppoſe) propagated, and all ſucceeding Generations preſerv'd by its Fruit, from all Infirmities and Diſorders; which Infirmities and Diſorders are now the univerſal Cauſes of Death. This ſeems imply'd in the Reaſon given for *Adam*'s Baniſhment from Paradiſe; *Leſt he take of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever.* Not that once Eating would have had ſuch Influence; but if he continued there, he might continue the Uſe of that Preſervative. 'Tis ſometimes ſuppos'd, this was prevented out of Mercy, that he might not continue ſo much longer under the Anguiſh of an unhappy Body: But this ſeems not to be a Time for Favours. 'Tis more probable, this Expulſion was Part of his Puniſhment; that God hereby ſupported his own Sentence, by expelling him from the Uſe of ſuch Means as might defeat it. 'Tis poſſible, the Fruit he had eat, contrary to his Maker's expreſs Command, might have a Sort of poiſonous Influence; and might breed, by degrees, the various Afflictions, to which his weak Poſterity have always been obnoxious: But however, this is certain, he became immediately mortal. How far Second Cauſes might contribute to this Mortality, can hardly

rdly be ſaid; but whatever concurr'd to his Poſterity muſt inherit it; they muſt alk in his Steps to the Grave.

The Conſequence of this Mortality was ot only a Temporary Separation of Soul nd Body, but a Relapſe of the Matter of hich that Body was compos'd, to its Ori- inal State, the State of common Duſt; ne- er more to recover any Relation to a ra- onal Spirit, any Appearance of human ature. Here, therefore, was a valuable Ad- antage loſt; but how can this be charg'd n God for ſo much as Severity? *What Death was to have been,*

The rational Soul could not be concern'd this Mortality, any farther than it might e affected by the Loſs of its Body, and di- urb'd by its Diſorders. This Sentence of eath was actually executed: *Death reign'd,* ys St. *Paul, from Adam to Moſes, on them hat had not ſinned after the ſimilitude of dam's tranſgreſſion*; and therefore, dy'd r his Sin. This Reign was founded on is Forfeiture. The Body, after its Diſſo- ution, remains in Being; the Matter of it ontinues: It requires only the ſame Form, o make it Human again. This Sentence, herefore, might be executed on the Body, nd yet leave Room for Redemption: But the Soul ceaſes to be, nothing remains of as a Subject for Reſtitution. Should the ody be reſtor'd, another Spirit may be gi- en it, but not the ſame: And another Spi- *On the Soul.* Rom. 5. 14.

rit muſt compoſe another Perſon, without any Relation to this World, without any Intereſt in what had been done by the former Spirit in that Body.

It is ſometimes ſaid, That the New Teſtament is a Comment on the Old; and that therefore we ſhould interpret Death in this Sentence, by that, where it uſually ſignifies a ſpiritual Death, *i. e.* a State of Miſery. That Death is there frequently to be underſtood in a ſpiritual Senſe, is certain: But 'tis as certain, that 'tis not always. And if this particular Inſtance in the Old Teſtament, be determin'd in the New to a natural Senſe; the ſeveral Inſtances of a ſpiritual one can be no Reaſon for underſtanding it otherwiſe. Whatever this Death was, St. *Paul* (as I obſerv'd before) aſſures us, that all died, all from *Adam* to *Moſes*; and we may add, upon the ſame Foundation, from *Moſes* to Chriſt. If, therefore, it were a ſpiritual Death, all (to the Incarnation at leaſt) muſt be miſerable in a future State. For, to ſay the Covenant of Redemption prevented this, is to ſay they did not dye. That a ſpiritual Death would have been the Conſequence of their Corruptions, without any Divine Interpoſition, is no Charge on God; ſince he could not be oblig'd to ſuch Interpoſition: But that 'twas not the Subject of his Sentence on *Adam*'s Crime, ſeems a plain

a plain Conſequence from its actual Execution. If, therefore, this Sentence of Death was executed, (as 'tis plain it was) then either all Mankind muſt be paſt all Poſſibility of Redemption, or all, to the Incarnation, miſerable. Or elſe it concern'd only the Body: And that it did ſo, appears likewiſe from the Sentence it ſelf, as denounc'd by God at firſt in more general Terms; *Thou ſhalt ſurely dye.* But when the Crime was committed, and the Condemnation actually paſt, 'tis join'd with this Explication; *Duſt thou art, and unto duſt ſhalt thou return,* All who believe the Body only to be compos'd of Duſt, muſt allow *that* only could return to it.

A late Eminent Author has indeed laid it down as certain, That the Sentence on *Adam*'s Tranſgreſſion was abſolutely *Ceaſing to be*; and has made this Notion the Foundation of the *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity.* What his Thoughts were, I will not affirm; but I muſt own, he ſeems to me (after having often read him with great Attention) to have made no real Diſtinction, no ſubſtantial Difference, between Soul and Body. He does not appear to drop the leaſt Hint of any ſeparate Exiſtence, or Poſſibility of it. He has given ſome Reaſon to ſuſpect him inclin'd to this Notion in ſome other Parts of his Works; but has not, I think, any where aſſerted it.

The Execution of that Sentence, is no Proof againſt this Notion of Death; becauſe if the whole Man be conſider'd as Material, the whole might dye, and be reviv'd. This Diſtinction, and ſeparate Exiſtence, I confeſs, I have taken for granted, and do not think this a proper Place to debate it. I ſhall only ſay at preſent, That if it be not true, all I have here ſaid concerning the Soul will be void; but if it be, all is concluſive; and I dare truſt it to this Iſſue. In this Caſe, therefore, we muſt conclude, either that God would put a Stop to the whole Race, to make our Nature conclude where it began; or elſe, have left 'em to the Iſſue of their own Conduct, without any Favour procur'd for the Soul, any Eſtabliſhments of Grace and Mercy, any Aſſiſtances in this World, or any Indulgences in the other.

Not Annihilation.

That he would not have annihilated this Part of the Creation, but let Things take their natural Courſe, have left the Souls of Men to their own Conduct, and the Conſequences of it; this is imply'd in thoſe Places of Scripture, that urge our Obligations to Chriſt as having reconcil'd us to God, and thereby deliver'd us from Miſery. This Reconciliation, this Deliverance (tho' the Price was paid upon the Croſs) did, in the Virtue and Efficacy of it, commence ſoon after the Fall. If, therefore, we were not

not otherwiſe to have been at all, (which is the plain Conſequence of God's cutting ſhort the Race of Mankind) we could not have been miſerable; and then there had been no Room for any ſuch Reconciliation; our Being it ſelf muſt have been the Purchaſe: But this is inconſiſtent with the conſtant Expreſſions of Scripture.

The Soul deſerted by God.

Had Men continued deſtitute of the Care and Protection of their Maker, diſinherited and abandon'd by their Father; what muſt have been the State of the Soul; neglected by God, ſollicited by Devils and confus'd Affections, and made deſperate by Judgment without Mercy? They would have no Rules, no Influence from Heaven, to regulate their Conduct; no Worſhip eſtabliſh'd, to ſanctify and refine their Inclination; no Encouragements propos'd, to reſtrain the corrupt Affections, in which they were engag'd. On the contrary; the vicious Examples, univerſally given and taken, would pervert and debauch all Parts of Life; their Deſpair of recovering their Inheritance in Heaven, would take away their Senſe of the moſt affecting Difference between Good and Evil, the Expectation of Reward or Puniſhment: And this, by degrees, would proſtitute their Souls to every Thing that was vicious; and if they retain'd any Thoughts of another World, they would ſerve only to torment them. The

Corruptions of their Nature, and the Deluſions of wicked Spirits, (to which they'd conſtantly be expos'd) theſe would keep 'em from any juſt Reaſoning about it, and from any Concern leſt they ſhould increaſe their Unhappineſs in it. Their Lives would have been fill'd with ſtrong Habits of Vice; and with as many ſuch, as the ſeveral Appetites and Affections of their Minds and Bodies, under no Reſtraint, and in the utmoſt Diſorder, would ſollicit for. For what ſhould hinder 'em from ſolliciting with Succeſs? And what Happineſs can we ſuppoſe ſuch Spirits capable of, when ſeparate from their Bodies? As to any particular State of Happineſs, any advantageous Circumſtances, any Favours to be enjoy'd in the other World; whatever they might have been, in the Original Deſign of their Creation, their Apoſtacy from God muſt forfeit all: As they were left to themſelves in this World, the beſt they could expect, would be, to be ſo in the other likewiſe. This had probably been our Condition in both Worlds; a Condition, to thoſe who behold the Bleſſings of Chriſtianity, full of Horror! But there appears no poſitive Vengeance on the Soul in this Caſe: And by what Law of Nature can God be oblig'd at all, to enter into Religious Diſpenſations with his Creatures? Why might he not, conſiſtent with the ſtricteſt Juſtice, leave 'em to the Uſe of their

No poſitive Vengeance on it.

their own Faculties? If a proper Uſe of them would make 'em happy, they'd be entirely oblig'd to him for that Happineſs; and if any groſs Abuſe of them made 'em miſerable, they could not inſiſt on any ſupernatural Means from him, to deliver 'em from the Conſequences of their Wickedneſs and Folly. If they were not ſubjected to ſome poſitive Puniſhment, it might be eſteemed Mercy: And in this Caſe, none ſuch appears; the poſitive Parts of Hell are to be conſider'd, as ſome of the Sanctions of the Covenant of Redemption. How miſerable ſoever, therefore, Mankind might have been, in Conſequence of deſerting and being deſerted by God; they could have nothing to complain of, but their own incorrigible Vices. Mat. 25. 41.

Should God have inflicted ſome poſitive Puniſhment after ſuch a Life, it would have abundantly juſtify'd it ſelf; but as none ſuch appears (from Revelation) denounc'd in the Sentence on *Adam*'s Crime, it is not reaſonable to make Chriſtianity accountable for any. That God, as Sovereign of the World, might have inflicted ſome ſuch Puniſhment on ſuch vicious Spirits, and aſſign'd them ſome State ſuitable to 'em, not left them to range at large in the World, without Diſtinction or Reſtraint; this might appear from natural Reaſon. And whatever might have been determin'd by God's

Sovereign Juriſdiction, it wou'd have had for its ſupport and Foundation, perſonal Viciouſneſs. But whatever might have been the Iſſue, it was prevented by Chriſt; the Covenant of Redemption interven'd, and by vrtue of that, Revelations and ſpiritual Aſſiſtances were granted, which very much mended the Condition of Mankind, tho' by Degrees, neglected and loſt among great Part of 'em, and not yet renew'd.

CHAP. V.

The unreaſonable Severity underſtood to be expreſs'd in the New Teſtament, againſt all that may or ever have liv'd without a Perſonal Faith in Chriſt, conſider'd.

Damning Heathens,

ANother heavy Prejudice againſt the Chriſtian Scheme, to which too many have added the Weight of their Authority, is, that Condemnation of ſo great a Majority of Mankind to eternal Miſery, for want of ſuch Faith in Chriſt as they never cou'd attain to. The univerſality of Chriſt's Merits appears to indifferent Judges but mocking Mankind; to offer a Favour upon impracticable Terms, is they ſay, only denying it in the moſt opprobrious Manner; and ſuch a per-

perſonal Explicit Faith, 'tis obvious to ſuppoſe impoſſible in the old Heathen World, as well as in vaſt Tracts of the preſent.

Not ſo general as ſuppos'd.

But before this Prejudice is fix'd on Chriſtianity, many things ought to be well conſider'd: Whether this be indeed the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, or only the Miſtake of ſome of its Profeſſors. It has not prevail'd ſo generally, in the leſs corrupted Part of the Chriſtian World, as may be ſuppos'd; ſome have been dogmatical in this unmerciful Principle, and this may have driven others into the oppoſite Extream. While ſome are poſitive no Happineſs cou'd ever be had, without entering Perſonally into the Covenant of Redemption, and an explicit Faith in Chriſt; others, to take off the terrible Conſequence of this, have thought fit to depreciate Faith in general, to repreſent it as an indifferent Thing, even under the Sun-ſhine of the Goſpel. But to leſſen the Weight of this Prejudice, it ſhou'd here be obſerv'd, that moſt of thoſe who inſiſt on Faith as unexceptionably neceſſary in all Mankind, declare they don't aſſign Heathens to Miſery, they only leave God to his own Secrets: This is only ſaying, they know not how otherwiſe to interpret ſome Texts of the New Teſtament, than ſo as to exclude Heathens; but yet they are aſſur'd, ſome Method will find a Place in God's Counſels, to prevent the abſolute Deſtruction

of

of the ſober Part of 'em. This Scheme may ſuppoſe 'em included in the original Covenant, tho' not favour'd with any ſince, tho' that Method of preventing their Deſtruction don't appear: The Authority of all ſuch therefore is to be deducted.

Uſually qualify'd. It ſhou'd likewiſe be obſerv'd, that the boldeſt Aſſerters of this dreadful Principle, except in that Church where the two Extremes of Terror and Flattery are to anſwer all Ends, uſually qualify it with ſome Caution and Uncertainty, and an imaginary Fund of uncovenanted Mercy.

Whatever innocent Expedient cou'd be found to divert this deſtructive Notion, one ſhou'd be ſtrongly tempted to conſent to it. But I doubt this of uncovenanted Mercy will be found far from innocent; it ſeems to lay all open to the Imaginations of Mankind, to make ſo great a Chaſm in God's Religious Providence, as ſeems unworthy both of him and our Redeemer. One uniform Propitiation by which all Mankind became capable of Happineſs, is much more agreeable, as well to the Attributes of God, as to the Scriptures; it is ſometimes avoided, as if it included ſomething dangerous in it; but nothing need fright any Man from conſidering this Principle, from the whole State of Revelation: That the Merits of Chriſt extend to all, even thoſe, who in the Integrity of their Hearts, die under invincible

Article of the Church, 31.

Igno-

Ignorance of the whole Chriſtian Diſpenſation.

The ſame Caution that declines this Aſſertion, does likewiſe decline the Conſequence of rejecting it, on the Juſtice and Goodneſs of Heaven. 'Tis ſuppos'd at the ſame Time, that great Allowances may be made at the laſt Day, to ſuch Perſons; but, if theſe Allowances do not make room for ſome Happineſs, the Conſequence is not avoided, and if they do, to what muſt thoſe Allowances and that Happineſs be originally imputed? Not ſurely to the Righteouſneſs of ſuch Perſons only, but to the favourable Acceptance purchas'd by Chriſt; and if ſo, then the Merits of Chriſt extend to them. *Allowances made them.*

Again, when ſuch Authorities declare againſt the Salvation of Heathens univerſally, they imply perhaps ſomething peculiar in the Goſpel Salvation; a particular Eminence in Happineſs proper to the Diſciples of Chriſt, with ſuch extraordinary Perſons under former Diſpenſations, as were bleſs'd with more than common Revelations concerning him: If ſo, all Chriſtians may heartily join with ſuch Exceptions; they may, with ſincere Praiſes to God for the Advantages of the Goſpel, declare their Belief, that a Chriſtian who makes the beſt Uſe of the Goſpel Means of Salvation, ſhall be far happier than the beſt of Heathens. But *Peculiar Salvation.*

then, 'tis plain, this Senſe of the Exception, diſperſes the Prejudice we are now ſpeaking of; it clears up God's Juſtice, and leaves all Things in a regular Dependance. As to all good Mens being equally acceptable to God, and having equal Means of Happineſs, this will come hereafter to be more particularly conſider'd. The Principle now under Debate, is of a very different Nature; its Nature is ſuch, that whatever can be ſuppos'd, ſhou'd be ſuppos'd, rather then conſent to it. The Condition of Heathens in general, deſerves as much of our Concern and Compaſſion, as the Providence of God will permit us to indulge it. Their Condition as to Idolatry and Immorality, is not the Subject of this Tenderneſs; there is too much Guilt in 'em: The Firſt Chapter to the *Romans* will not admit any Apologies, they are plainly pronounc'd inexcuſable. But it is not here enquir'd what they are guilty of, but what they are oblig'd to; their Guilt is perſonal, and it does not well become any of their Fellow Creatures to ſit in Judgment on 'em. The proper Queſtion here is, What is their Rule? Whether they have tranſgreſs'd unpardonably or not, muſt be referr'd to their proper Judge. But whatever their Portion be in a future State, it ſhou'd not be imputed to God; either excluding 'em out of the Covenant of Redemption, or, which may appear to amount to the ſame Thing, requiring

quiring of 'em impoſſible Conditions. If they are allow'd a Capacity of pleaſing God, and being in ſome meaſure acceptable to him for the ſake of Chriſt, the Chriſtian Diſpenſation will eaſily be juſtify'd. They who are inclin'd to the worſt Concluſions, may look on 'em as a Part of Mankind grown wild; and as ſuch, deſtroying the Indulgence purchas'd by Chriſt. Providing the original Covenant of Redemption be left entire, they may be ſuppos'd to have ruin'd themſelves, to have forfeited their Share of Mercy, to have neglected their Means of Happineſs; any thing, but to periſh for want of a Redeemer. Many that maintain the more rigid Part of this Queſtion, ſuppoſe themſelves ſupported by the 18th Article of the Church; but ſure moſt injuriouſly. If it be not allow'd ſufficient to ſatisfy this Article, to ſay, No Man's Salvation is to be imputed to his own Righteouſneſs, but to the Merits of Chriſt; becauſe his Practice, how accurate ſoever, will not be ſo perfect as to juſtify him; and that therefore all muſt take Refuge under the Croſs of Chriſt: Whoever is not ſatisfy'd with this, may conſider farther; this Article ſuppoſes the Perſons ſpoke of, oblig'd by their Situation in Life, to an explicit Faith; ſuch as live under the Goſpel Light; ſuch as have been plac'd by Providence within the Influence of it, but

Article the 18th.

but have enclos'd themſelves with Prejudices, and preferr'd Darkneſs before it.

What is condemn'd in it.

The Subject of this Article may reaſonably be interpreted the ſame Infidelity that's ſo frequently condemn'd in the New Teſtament, Not ſubmitting to the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, after it has been ſufficiently atteſted. It aſſerts, They are juſtly cenſur'd, who place all Men on a Level, with reſpect to God's Inſtitutions; who make nothing neceſſary, but the Law of Nature; and providing Men frame their Life by that, ſpeak Peace to their Souls as ſafe enough. The Conſequence of ſuch a Principle muſt break out into great Miſchiefs: It muſt repreſent the Revelations and Covenants of God as impertinent; aſſerting, that Men may be as acceptable to him without 'em, as with 'em: It muſt juſtify all Violations of the Law of Nature it ſelf, if they're made a Part of that Law, or that Sect which they profeſs. The Scheme of each Sect once ſettled, muſt in courſe pronounce all Things good or evil, as they agree or diſagree with it. And as Idolatry, Obſcenity, Inhumanity, and a long Train of unnatural Corruptions, may be enjoin'd by wild Schemes of Religion; this Principle wou'd overturn every thing that's good, by giving every Man a Blank, to write in it what Principles he pleaſes. But tho' ſuch an Aſſertion be falſe, and little leſs than Blaſ-

Blaſphemy, and therefore wiſely condemn'd by this Article; yet 'tis far from condemning thoſe who were plac'd by Providence under different Diſpenſations, or quite out of the Reach of Chriſt; who never could hear of the Chriſtian Doctrines; 'tis far from condemning ſuch to irrecoverable Miſery for not believing 'em, far from denying 'em the leaſt Proportion of Intereſt in the great Expiation.

Appeal to the Scriptures.

The laſt Appeal muſt be to the Scriptures. And tho' 'tis reaſonable to ſuppoſe, they ſhou'd rather direct thoſe to whom they are addreſs'd, to their own Duty, and the Conſequence of performing or neglecting it, than entertain their Curioſity upon ſuch Queſtions as concern others; yet it may frequently happen, that collateral Conſequences may follow from general Propoſitions, and ſome inferior or leſs uſeful Truths may be brought as Mediums to others more immediately neceſſary. By this means we may be furniſh'd with Arguments on both Sides of this Queſtion. Such as are uſually thought to conclude againſt theſe unhappy Men, are all contain'd under this general Topick, or reducible to it, That Salvation is appropriated to Faith: For which there are ſo many Authorities, that 'tis needleſs to produce any.

In order to underſtand the New Teſtament in this Caſe, 'tis neceſſary to take a gene-

general View, firſt of Salvation, and then
Salvation, of Faith. Salvation may eaſily be obſerv'd to paſs thro' ſeveral Degrees, ſeveral Subjects, and muſt therefore be diſtinguiſh'd accordingly. The Iſſue of the whole is this: Such was the Goodneſs of God, he created the whole rational World directly for this End, That they might be happy. This Happineſs he was truly concerned for, and provided accordingly in the ſeveral Degrees and Ranks of ſuch Creatures. But their Nature imply'd ſuch Liberty, as might poſſibly be abuſed: Their Succeſs therefore in this good End might be prevented.

As the Wiſdom of God may be obſerv'd in all Parts of the Creation, in gradual Advances to Perfection; ſo Men particularly proceed in Advances proper to their Nature, and by them arrive at their eſtabliſh'd and conſummate Happineſs: And this Happineſs, when regularly ſecur'd, he's pleas'd to repreſent as his own Proſperity, as his own Succeſs, as an Acquiſition to himſelf. If we are wiſe enough to conſent to our own Happineſs, he's pleas'd to call it ſo much ſav'd of the World: If we are ſo refractory and ungovernable as to deſtroy our ſelves, he repreſents it as his Loſs, his Goodneſs is ſo far diſappointed.

Temporal and Eternal. In this important Subject, this great Diſtinction is Temporal and Eternal; for 'tis here to be conſider'd only as Spiritual.

The

The ſecular Senſe is of no Moment. 'Tis ſufficient to obſerve, that 'tis conſtantly the Senſe in the Old Teſtament, except ſome few Places where the Goſpel State is prophetically ſpoke of; even where the Sins of Men are the Things from which they are ſaid to be ſav'd, we are to underſtand their being deliver'd from ſecular Severities, as the Puniſhments of thoſe Sins. And in the New Teſtament, this Senſe is almoſt peculiar to the Goſpels, expreſs'd in ſuch Inſtances as this; *Thy Faith hath ſav'd thee:* Where the Subject is plainly the Cure of a Diſeaſe. Iſa. 51. 6, 8.

The Spiritual, in its Temporal Capacity, is to be conſider'd as ſupernatural Means of Happineſs, then plainly propos'd to Mankind. In its Eternal Capacity, 'tis the ſupreme End of all, the Inveſtiture of our final Happineſs. The Temporal therefore is repreſented as preſent, and actually accompliſh'd: The Eternal is future, and ſtill depends on our Behaviour.

Thoſe Places which concern this Temporal Salvation may properly be reduc'd to theſe two Heads: 1. A Method of Spiritual Improvement, or a religious Inſtitution. 2. Being receiv'd into the Church of Chriſt; not left in the Corruptions of the *Gentile* World, nor in the Ruins of *Judaiſm*, when *Iſrael* was no longer God's peculiar People. *Temporal divided.*

1. *A Method of Spiritual Life.* As a Method, 'tis *Zachariah's Horn of Salvation*: The ſame with St. *Paul's Power of God unto Salvation*; the Horn being a Prophetick Repreſentative of Power. 'Twas this our Saviour meant, when he ſaid to *Zacheus, This day is ſalvation come to thine houſe.* This he meant, when he told the Woman of *Samaria, Salvation was of the Jews.* God gave them the Preference in the Publication of the Goſpel: When this Advantage was ſlighted, the Apoſtles had Directions to ſhow God's Reſentment of this Contempt. For this Reaſon we find St. *Paul* declaring to the *Jews, Be it known unto ye, that the ſalvation of God is ſent unto the Gentiles.* In theſe and a Multitude of other Places, Salvation ſignifies a religious Method or State of Life, in which their Souls were ſecure.

John 4. 22.

Acts 28. 28.

2. *Being receiv'd into the Chriſtian Church.* The other Temporal Senſe in which 'tis us'd, is not much different; it repreſents the Admiſſion of Converts into the Chriſtian Church. The eſtabliſhing a Church upon the good, the acceptable, the perfect Will of God, was one great Point our Saviour propos'd. *He gave himſelf for us, that he might purify to himſelf a peculiar people.* As many therefore as came into this happy Number, are ſaid to be ſav'd in this Senſe; and they who did not, are frequently repreſented as loſt: In them God's gracious Purpoſe was defeated, for which

that Word expreſſes an affectionate Concern.

This Senſe of Salvation is very frequently met with. St. *Peter*, in his firſt Sermon, Acts 2. 40. by which he converted 3000 Souls, after having repreſented the Promiſes of God to ſuch as ſhould be call'd, and urg'd the Character and Dignity of Chriſt, ſums up the whole in theſe Words; *Save your ſelves from this untoward generation.* You are now offer'd from Heaven all the Bleſſings of the Goſpel, be not perſuaded to deſpiſe 'em by the obſtinate Infidelity of the Age: You are invited into the Church of the Firſtborn, do not chuſe to wander with an ungovernable Multitude. That this Salvation is being receiv'd into the Chriſtian Church, appears more plainly from the 47th Verſe; *The Lord added to the Church daily ſuch as ſhould be ſaved*; τὺς σωζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν, ſuch as were daily ſav'd, *i. e.* converted; ſuch as were prevail'd on by the Labours of the Apoſtles to forſake the Prejudices of the Age, and become the Diſciples of Chriſt. In the Caſe of *Cornelius*, the Angel that appear'd to him to inform him of St. *Peter*'s Commiſſion, tells him, St. *Peter* ſhould tell him Words, whereby he and all his Houſe ſhould be ſav'd. If we underſtand this of Eternal Salvation, we muſt affirm, That before this Application, they were not in a State or Diſpoſition for future Happineſs:

Acts 10. 11. But if we conſider the Character that's given of him before his Converſion, we ſhall find this too groſs to be affirm'd. He's call'd a devout Man, and his Alms are declar'd by the Angel to be accepted by God, as are his Prayers likewiſe; they are repreſented as Evidence recorded in his Favour: and he is expreſsly call'd a Juſt Man, a word generally us'd in Scripture to ſignify a Perſon acceptable to God: Their being ſav'd therefore muſt mean, their being call'd out of that State in which they enjoy'd none of the Advantages of Chriſtianity, and being admitted Members of the Chriſtian Church: They believ'd in God before, but knew nothing of Chriſt.

This Notion of Salvation appears more plainly in St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſes concerning *Iſrael*; where his Meaning is leſs diſputable, becauſe 'tis apply'd to 'em as a People.

Rom. 9. 26. In the 9th Chapter to the *Romans*, *Hoſea*'s Words are firſt apply'd; *It ſhall come to paſs, where it was ſaid unto them, Ye are not my people, there ſhall they be call'd the children of the living God.* Then *Iſaiah* is appeal'd to for the ſame thing: *Tho' the Number of the children of Iſrael be as the ſand of the ſea, a remnant ſhall be ſav'd*; i. e. only ſome few of 'em ſhall be preſerved in the Number of God's People; ſome few only ſhall be prevail'd on to come into the Chriſtian Church. Upon this Notion, St. *Paul* prays

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to God, that *Iſrael might be ſav'd*, i. e. brought into that ſpiritual Conſtitution eſtabliſh'd as the only Church of God, when this *Moſaick* was repeal'd. Accordingly, *Chap.* 11. 5. God's having reſerv'd Seven Thouſand that had not been perverted to the Worſhip of *Baal*, is brought as a Similitude or parallel Caſe to ſhew this Salvation by; and immediately follows, *Even ſo at this preſent time alſo, there is a remnant according to the election of grace*: Some are now ſav'd, they are not all loſt, not all alienated from God, ſome are receiv'd into the Chriſtian Church. Rom. 10. 1.

The melancholick State of that People generally rejecting the Chriſtian Faith, is repreſented by *ſtumbling*; and yet the Apoſtle ſays, *God forbid that they ſhould fall*; but by their preſent Slip, *Salvation is come to the Gentiles*; they are call'd into the Church of Chriſt. But 'twill one Day appear, that *God has not caſt away his people*; *Blindneſs is happen'd unto Iſrael in part* only, only for ſome time; when the Fulneſs of the *Gentiles* is come in, *all Iſrael ſhall be ſaved*. Rom. 11. 11.

'Tis plain enough, all ſuch Places relate immediately to the Church of Chriſt, and determine nothing with reſpect to a future State, or the Condition of ſingle Perſons in it, any farther than as that Condition may

be affected by the Enjoyment, or by the Want of the Advantages of Chriſtianity.

1 Cor. 1, 18. St. *Paul* calls the Goſpel, *the Power of God to himſelf, and the reſt that were ſaved, i. e.* converted. He would not have pronounc'd on his own, and their Eternal Salvation, as a Thing fix'd, and certainly accompliſh'd.

2 Theſſ. 2. 13, 15. This is confirm'd by what he ſays to the *Theſſalonians*; *God hath, from the beginning, choſen you to Salvation*; *i. e.* God hath, from the Foundation of Chriſtianity, from the firſt forming the Chriſtian Covenant, deſign'd to call you *Gentiles* into the Chriſtian Church. But 'tis plain, from what follows, this was no Determination for Eternity. Had it been ſo, there had been no Room for the Exhortation given in the 15th Verſe; *Therefore, brethren, ſtand faſt.* To this, it had been obvious to anſwer, Our Intereſt is made: Who can controul God? But the whole comes only to Hope; they were therefore choſen only to Chriſtianity: A Parallel to 2 *Pet.* 1. 10. An Exhortation to Chriſtians, to *make their Calling and Election ſure, i. e.* firm, effectual to its End.

2 Pet. 1. 10.

We may be fully ſatisfy'd in this Particular, by St. *Paul*'s plain Declaration, in theſe words; *Who hath ſaved us, and called us with an holy calling.* Here, being ſav'd, is immediately explain'd by being call'd with

2 Tim. 1. 9.

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an holy Calling; *i. e.* being call'd into the Chriſtian Diſpenſation.

I depend on it; the Importance of this Diſtinction, and the right Interpretation of ſuch Texts which depends on that, will juſtify my producing ſo many. In all theſe, and many more that might be eaſily collected, the Concern of God for bringing Mankind under the immediate Conduct of Chriſt, is repreſented as what he had much at Heart. Where he fails, 'tis lamented as a Loſs; where he ſucceeds, 'tis diſtinguiſh'd with Tokens of Joy and Satisfaction. 'Tis like Health, in the midſt of a general Infection; like ſomething ſav'd in Shipwreck.

Eternal Salvation.

But there is a much higher Notion of Salvation; Fix'd, Abſolute, and Eternal. This being ſufficiently apprehended univerſally, the fewer Appeals to Scripture may be ſufficient, in Proof of this Senſe of it. Acts 15. 11.

St. *Paul* deſcribes a Perſon truly concern'd for his Sins, in this manner: *Godly ſorrow worketh repentance to ſalvation, not to be repented of.* Theſe Words were written to a Chriſtian Church, and therefore can have no Meaning ſhort of the Great End of Chriſtianity. 2 Cor. 7. 10.

The ſame Apoſtle admoniſhes the *Philippians*, to *work out their ſalvation with fear and trembling.* The Subject of this Indu- Phil. 2. 12.

ſtry and Solicitude, ſupported by the Co-operation of God's Spirit, can be nothing leſs than the final Happineſs of their Nature.

Heb. 5. 9. He tells us again, in another Place, that Chriſt *being made perfect, became the author of eternal ſalvation to all them that obey him.* This Salvation is expreſly call'd Eternal; and being confin'd to Obedience, is ſhown to be the ultimate Reward of it.

1 Pet. 1. 5. St. *Peter* deſcribes Chriſtians, as Perſons *kept by the power of God unto ſalvation, ready to be revealed in the laſt time.* This Salvation is evidently the ſame with what's mention'd in the former Verſe, under the Character of *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away*; which is expreſly ſaid to be *reſerved in heaven for us.*

A peculiar State of Glory. There is one peculiar Notion of this Eternal Salvation, which I ought to mention; and I am very willing to do it, both in regard to the Authority of thoſe who have maintain'd it, and the Countenance it appears to have from the New Teſtament: And it is this; a peculiar State of Glory, appropriated to the faithful Subjects of Chriſt. As Chriſt has a peculiar People upon Earth, he ſeems deſcrib'd at the Head of a ſelect Number in Heaven; *Called, and Choſen, and Faithful*; eminently happy in that glorious Condition! This Number may

Rev. 17. 14.

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be deſcrib'd by St. *Paul*, in the Order obſerv'd in the General Reſurrection: *Chriſt is himſelf the firſt fruits, afterwards they that are Chriſt's at his coming.* 1 Cor. 15. 23. Theſe have the Precedence of the reſt of Mankind, even in riſing from their Graves.

This peculiar Happineſs may be St. *Paul's Eternal Weight of Glory.* He ſeems to have had ſomething very extraordinary in his Mind, when he writ thoſe words, καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης: And to ſuppoſe ſuch an Eminence in Happineſs the Reward of pious Chriſtians, ſeems very agreeable to the Oeconomy of God, and the gradual Progreſs of Revelations. And it may poſſibly be imply'd in thoſe Words of Chriſt, *In my Father's houſe are many manſions*; many various Situations in Happineſs; and, *I go to prepare a place for you; that where I am, ye may be alſo:* That ye may be ever with me, and enjoy your Share of my Glory. This is being with the Lord. 2 Cor. 4. 17. Epheſ. 1. 18. John 14. 2.

This may be St. *Peter's* Meaning; *An entrance ſhall be miniſtred unto you abundantly, into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* His Univerſal Kingdom is to be deliver'd up to the Father, immediately after the General Reſurrection, and final Judgment: But yet, he ſhall be for ever *glorified in his Saints*; this *Kingdom ſhall have no End.* 2 Pet. 1. 11.

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But however, this excludes not others from ſuch Happineſs as the Searcher of Hearts ſhall judge them diſpos'd for: On the contrary, I think, it ſuppoſes Variety of Rewards.

Such are the Scripture-Notions of Salvation: As Temporal, it ſometimes ſignifies a ſafe Method, or State of Religious Life; and ſometimes, our Admiſſion into the Chriſtian Church: As Eternal, it ſignifies the Final Eſtabliſhment of our Nature in Eternal Happineſs; whether as General, or, by its peculiar Circumſtances, diſtinguiſh'd as Chriſtian.

Such an Eternal Proviſion for our Secure, Fix'd, Uninterrupted Happineſs, is beyond all Acknowledgments; beyond the utmoſt Efforts of the moſt grateful Heart. And yet, the Manner in which God has been pleas'd to expreſs his Concern for our Succeſs in this way, in which he has plac'd us, has ſomething in it ſtill more endearing. He laments our Miſcarriage as his Loſs; he ſeems to rejoice at our good Conduct, as his own Gain: This, ſure, ſhould engage us in a ſuitable Concern, to act in Concert with him. We can all preſs upon our Children ſuch an affectionate Truth as this; Nature inſpires us with juſt Thoughts, and with proper Eloquence on ſuch a Subject: And as we can't help being heartily concern'd for their Happineſs, we can't help being

being ſhock'd at their Obſtinacy, if they will not obſerve the Directions we give 'em to obtain it. 'Tis very eaſy to transfer this paternal Concern to the Father of Spirits; and the Argument, inſtead of loſing by this Remove, is very much improv'd. God's not ſuffering by our Obſtinacy, is a great Recommendation of his Goodneſs in preſſing our Duty: And if we can our ſelves lament the Extravagance of our Children, as it ruins their Happineſs in this World; what can ſupport our Spirits in an undutiful Behaviour to God, our Common, Everlaſting Father? A Behaviour, that muſt deſtroy the whole Deſign of our Creation! But this Reflection, how juſt ſoever, may perhaps be charg'd as a Digreſſion: I proceed, therefore, to the Scripture-Notions of Faith.

Faith in God, and in Chriſt.

This Chriſt himſelf divides into Faith in God, and Faith in Him: *Ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.* Faith in him, was the Conſummation of their Faith in God: God then apply'd his whole Authority to the Character and Authority of Chriſt. For this Reaſon, Chriſt declares, *He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that ſent me.* And St. *John* aſſures us, *He that believeth not God, hath made him a lyar; becauſe he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* 'Tis obvious

John 14. 1.

John 12. 44.

1 John 5. 10.

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to obſerve from hence, as to this Diviſion, that Faith in Chriſt muſt imply Faith in God; but Faith in God, does not always imply Faith in Chriſt: And yet, from theſe Authorities of St. *John*, 'tis certain, that it ſometimes does imply it; inſomuch, that not to believe in Chriſt, is to throw off all Faith in God. The only Reaſon of this Difference muſt be, that in ſome Caſes, Men may be entirely ignorant of Chriſt, and therefore believe nothing concerning him, without any Violence offer'd to God's Veracity, or their Reſignation to him; whereas, in other Caſes, where competent Evidence has been given 'em, where proper Application has been made to them from Heaven; there to deny the Authority of ſuch Evidence and Application, and continue obſtinate againſt Chriſt, is a great Breach of their Duty to God; 'tis an Epilepſy of their Faith in him.

Faith in God, ſpeculative.

This General Diviſion of Faith is again diſtinguiſh'd in both its Branches, and exactly in the ſame manner. Firſt, it ſignifies an Intellectual Conviction, a Speculative Conſent to the Being of its Object: Secondly, a practical and affectionate Reſignation to it; a Submiſſion of the Will, with a dutiful Satisfaction. With reſpect to Faith in God, St. *James*, in his Second Chapter, expoſtulates the Vanity and Unreaſonableneſs

neſs of ſtopping at this loweſt Senſe of it: *Thou believeſt there is one God; thou doſt well: The Devils alſo believe and tremble.* James 2. 19.

This Faith, ſolitary and unactive, may command Aſſent; as Objects, that are duly preſented to our Eyes, command our Apprehenſion, and make themſelves ſeen: But as Attention, and proper Concluſions from them, are very much at our own Diſcretion, ſo is the Uſe of ſuch Faith. And as the Devils, under all the Terror of this Belief, are induſtrious to perſwade Men that there's no ſuch Being; ſo, I doubt not, many of thoſe Bravo's, who glory in their Infidelity, tremble at the Thoughts of that God whom they affect to defy; and would perſwade others to depend on their Authority, for what they can't themſelves believe. While they continue hardy againſt all Impreſſions, all Influence from their Faith, 'twere to be wiſh'd they could be Infidels. And 'tis not ſtrange that they take ſo much Pains to be ſo; ſuch Faith ſerves only to torment 'em at preſent, and to increaſe their Torments hereafter. 'Tis probable, the Devils themſelves, when they undertake to form this Character, urge abſolute Infidelity no farther, than to prevent the Effects of Faith: They leave the Notion as a Corpſe, that may be offenſive, and offenſive only.

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Practical. The other Senſe of Faith in God is very general and comprehenſive: It muſt ſignify the Submiſſion of our Souls to him; an entire Satisfaction in his Authority; not diſputing the Truth or Propriety of any Thing, of which we think him the Author, but depending on both, and conducting our Lives accordingly. For this, we need look Hebr. 11. no farther than the Eleventh Chapter to the *Hebrews*: We have there a great Number of Inſtances, in which Faith terminates in God; but conſiders him not only as being, but as being likewiſe *the Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*; and engages the Soul to a ſuitable Dependance on him, a faithful Obedience to what it knows to be his Will; in full Aſſurance of future Happineſs. And 'tis to be obſerv'd, that all theſe Inſtances are ancient, plac'd in diſtant Ages of the World.

Faith in Chriſt. Secondly, Faith in Chriſt is not always more efficacious than Faith in God. St. *John*, in the Twelfth Chapter of his Goſpel, in- John 12. 42. forms us, that *many of the Chief Rulers believed on him, but, becauſe of the Phariſees, they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the Synagogue: For they loved the Praiſe of Men more than the Praiſe of God.* This, I doubt, is the Caſe of too *Merely being convinced.* many at preſent: Too many ſeem to comply with the vicious Humours of ſome intimate Companions, and rather than diſoblige

oblige them, diſpenſe with their Principles, and lay aſide their Religion: To inſiſt on them might be diſagreeable, and perhaps, by degrees, baniſh them their Converſation. Such Perſons believe in Chriſt, as Men believe the ſeveral Princes in *Europe*, to be indeed poſſeſs'd of their reſpective Thrones: Nay, more; they believe him to have a juſt Title to their Duty and Obedience: But they believe this, as Thieves and Robbers believe the Proprietors of their ſtolen Goods to have a juſt Title to them, without the leaſt Inclination to reſtore 'em.

Reſigning to him.

But the full Senſe of Faith in Chriſt, is not only being convinc'd of all Parts of his Character, but reſigning to him the whole Intereſt of our Nature; ſubmitting our Souls to be conducted by his Rules. This is what St. *Paul* underſtood by Faith, when he ſays, *With the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs.* This Faith has its Seat in the Heart. The Heart is uſually conſider'd as the Seat of the Affections; the Throne, in which the Soul ſits, and delivers her Commands to the whole Man. As the Head is uſually repreſented the Seat of the Underſtanding, ſo is the Heart of the Will. This being the general Courſe of Language, we are to underſtand St. *Paul* accordingly. When we ſpeak of the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, as a particular Syſtem of Principles, we may properly perſwade Chriſtian

Rom. 10. 10.

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Profeſſors to endeavour to underſtand 'em; but when we ſpeak of the Faith of particular Perſons, we muſt imply their underſtanding what we ſuppoſe 'em to believe. St. *Paul* therefore inculcates more than this: He implies, that where Men believe unto Righteouſneſs, they muſt be heartily affected with the Subjects of their Faith. 'Tis not enough that they give a cold, a ſpeculative, an hiſtorical Aſſent to their Faith; they muſt ſink into their Hearts, they muſt influence that with a Concern for 'em, in ſome meaſure proportion'd to their great Importance. Such Faith muſt *work by love*, as the ſame Apoſtle inſiſts in another Place.

Gal. 5. 6.

The true Goſpel Faith.

From the whole, we may I think form one compleat Notion of a true Goſpel Faith, by compounding it in this manner. An entire Dependance on God's Truth, and a faithful Reſignation to his Will, as they are diſpens'd in Jeſus Chriſt.

This uſually is called emphatically, Faith in Chriſt, becauſe his Character is now the Foundation of all our Religion.

Obſervation.

From this View of Salvation and Faith, as they are inſiſted on in the New Teſtament, we may obſerve, Firſt, Where Faith and Salvation are join'd as an immediate Cauſe and Effect; as in *Acts* 16. 31. in the Caſe of the Jailor, *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſav'd and thy houſe.* Faith here ſignifies only the Conviction of his

Act. 16. 31.

his Mind, upon the great Point then debated, Whether Chriſt was the true Meſſiah? And Salvation is only Temporal, his being put into a ſecure Method of ſpiritual Life, or receiv'd into the Chriſtian Church.

I muſt here obſerve upon that Advocate of Chriſtianity, whom I have mention'd before; that the Article of Faith he ſo much inſiſts on as ſelf-ſufficient, was of this Nature only; only the Conviction of the Mind concerning the Character of Chriſt, that he was indeed the Meſſiah: This was ſufficient for Baptiſm. But tho' the great Buſineſs of the Apoſtles, when they went about preaching among *Jews* and *Heathens*, was to make Converts; yet to Chriſtians, in order to build them up in their Faith, they left the Principle of the Doctrine of Chriſt, and went on unto Perfection. And in the Multitude of Inſtances in which this Author ſo ſecurely triumphs, becauſe Salvation is attributed to this firſt Principle of Chriſtianity, and which is the ſame Thing, under another Name, Juſtification too; excepting the few Inſtances in which he miſtakes Faith, and puts the entire Goſpel Faith for this ſpeculative Point: I ſee no Reaſon to doubt, but he miſtakes the Temporal Salvation, and Temporal Juſtification, for Eternal; and if ſo, all his laborious Collections muſt be uſeleſs. Who doubts but that Chriſt and his Apoſtles inſiſted on

this Principle, That he was the Meſſiah, in order to make Converts; and by Baptiſm, admitted 'em as Members of his Church? But this was only reſigning to him as their Lord and Maſter; a full Aſſurance, that what Doctrines ſhou'd be deliver'd to 'em by him or his Apoſtles, were true. But the great Deſign of all this, was to learn, believe and practiſe thoſe Doctrines: This Principle was the only Foundation.

The Perſons who fail of this Faith, and this Salvation, are certainly great Sufferers; they loſe all the Advantages propos'd by the Goſpel Diſpenſation; which we muſt allow of the higheſt Value that any thing in this World can be, if we conſider the Exultations of St. *Paul* upon this Subject. But however, this don't in all Caſes amount to abſolute Condemnation; all ſuch Texts therefore are miſapply'd in this Queſtion. They affirm only, that none cou'd be Members of the Chriſtian Church, and enjoy the Advantages of the Evangelical Diſpenſation, without believing in Chriſt; but they contain no Authority for any farther Concluſion. 'Twill indeed follow from the Nature of the Thing, that they who might become Chriſtians, and deſpis'd all the Bleſſings of the Goſpel, were highly guilty; but 'twill not follow, that they who cou'd not, they to whom thoſe Bleſſings never were propos'd, muſt be ſo too.

Secondly,

Secondly, When Salvation in its eternal Senſe, or ſomething equivalent, as Life, or eternal Life, is annex'd to Faith in Chriſt, Faith is to be interpreted in its full Goſpel Senſe. And in ſuch Places, it may deſerve to be well conſider'd, whether a peculiar State of Glory may not be properly underſtood, a State that excludes all who have not been educated under the Purity of the Goſpel, or elſe have been favoured with ſingular Revelations, before the Incarnation, by which they might be equally qualify'd with Chriſtians, for that Eminence in Heaven, a State that will diſtinguiſh the faithful Subjects of Chriſt; but however, not the only State of Happineſs. If this may be ſo, it cuts off all damnatory Concluſions; it leaves thoſe who were not ſo happy as to enjoy the Chriſtian Revelations, to ſuch Degrees of Happineſs, as their faithful Behaviour under great Diſadvantages may deſerve. 2.

But if this be not allow'd; if by Salvation in ſuch Places be meant Happineſs in general, ſo that denying it is denouncing Miſery, unleſs we ſuppoſe Annihilation: They who inſiſt on ſuch Texts, ſhou'd be clear in their Proof, that the Subjects of 'em are all Men univerſally, and not thoſe particularly to whom the Goſpel was vouchſafed. This ſeems the moſt obvious and moſt reaſonable Senſe. As a great Difference is to be made among the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity,

as they do either heartily believe it, or elſe, only not disbelieve it; as theſe latter, who only ſuffer the Articles of Chriſtianity to paſs unmoleſted, are not the true Scripture Believers: So likewiſe, muſt we make as great Difference between disbelieving, and not believing 'em. There may be Multitudes of theſe latter, who never cou'd hear of 'em: Theſe therefore do not believe, but they are not the Scripture Infidels.

St. *Paul* obſerves, That what the Law ſays, it ſays to them that are under the Law: May we not upon this Authority conclude, That what the Goſpel ſays, it ſays to them that are under the Goſpel? The many plain Declarations againſt thoſe that believe not in Chriſt, and the Condemnation contain'd in 'em, will appear moſt juſt, when apply'd to their proper Subjects, ſuch as have had ſufficient Evidence; but they do not conclude againſt thoſe that have not had it.

3. Thirdly, Salvation ſtrictly underſtood, may perhaps not properly be apply'd in any Senſe from the New Teſtament, to any but thoſe who live under the Goſpel; and ſo likewiſe, Faith in Chriſt may probably be found peculiar to the Goſpel State. After all that hath been ſaid about Faith in a Meſſiah to come, it is not ſo clear as to determine the Fate of ſo great a Majority of Mankind, that he was ever mention'd otherwiſe

wiſe than with prophetick Obſcurity; it is not ſo certain as this Principle muſt ſuppoſe it, that he was conditionally propos'd as the Object of their Faith, in order to eternal Life, as he is in the New Teſtament. For this Reaſon, they who are moſt forward to condemn the ancient Heathens upon Goſpel Terms, may perhaps upon ſerious Reflections be convinc'd, that they miſapply both Salvation and Faith; and that the true State of this Queſtion, is this, Whether ſome future Happineſs is not attainable upon the Original Covenant of Redemption, (which is probably St. *Paul's everlaſting Covenant*) by thoſe who never did, nor ever cou'd hear of Chriſt, by virtue of their Faith in God; as Faith in God has been explain'd in its full Senſe. Whether ſuch Happineſs be attainable by 'em by ſuch Faith, is ſcarce ever conſider'd; the Arguments that are uſually brought againſt 'em, are taken from Texts that have no relation to 'em. I hope, this appears in a good meaſure, from what has been already ſaid. Heb. 13. 20.

But it ſeems to me of ſo much Moment to remove this Scandal from Chriſtianity, that I am contented to inſiſt on the other Hand, That the New Teſtament is plainer in what ſeems applicable in their Favour, than in what's urg'd againſt 'em.

We ſhall find throughout the Scripture, that the true juſtifying Faith, is in general, *True juſtifying Faith.*

Faith in God, believing whatever he reveals to us, and conducting by his Will. But becauſe they to whom Chriſt is reveal'd, cannot have this Faith in God, without believing in Chriſt, and ſubmitting to his Laws; therefore in whatever Degree of Evidence and Explicitneſs Chriſt is reveal'd to any Part of Mankind, in that Degree the Chriſtian Faith becomes neceſſary to 'em: But they, to whom Chriſt is in no Degree reveal'd, are not on that account criminally defective in their Faith; they are ignorant of many Things that wou'd be of great Uſe to their Souls, but they disbelieve nothing God has declar'd to 'em, they diſobey nothing he has commanded 'em.

The *Jews* had ſome Notices of Chriſt, and therefore were oblig'd to ſome general Gal. 3.23. Faith in him. But St. *Paul* tells us, *They were kept under the law before faith came, ſhut up unto the faith which ſhould afterwards be reveal'd.* What Faith they cou'd have in Chriſt, appears from hence very Summary and Implicit, and very far ſhort of the Chriſtian: The Chriſtian Faith was not yet come, it was not yet reveal'd. As *John* the Baptiſt was fill'd with the Holy Ghoſt from his Mother's Womb, ſo ſome eminent Perſons in the Infancy of the World, might probably be favour'd with extraordinary Revelations; but this was not the common Standard. As the Familiars of Chriſt were

were allow'd to know the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, while others were permitted to hear of 'em in Parables only; ſo an *Enoch* or an *Abraham* might be let into particular Views of God's Counſels, while others heard of 'em only in dark Prophecies, ſuch as might raiſe ſome general Expectation of great Things, and in time, ſerve as Proofs of 'em, ſerve as Credentials for Chriſt Incarnate.

Abraham's *Faith.*

The Goſpel was preach'd to *Abraham.* The Evangelical Diſpenſation was the Subject Matter of that gracious Promiſe, *In thee ſhall all the families of the earth be bleſſed.* How far he was admitted into the ſpiritual Contents of that Bleſſing, will not eaſily appear. Conſidering the State in which he had formerly liv'd, and the Favour in which he now was with God, and the Character he was to ſuſtain in the World, 'tis probable he was indulg'd particular Revelations, both concerning Chriſt and a future State; and without queſtion, heartily believed whatever was revealed to him. But if we examine what's ſaid of his Faith in the New Teſtament, we ſhall find his Praiſe and Righteouſneſs are fix'd upon his Reſignation to God, his believing all he promis'd, and acting accordingly. His Faith may be obſerv'd to conſiſt in theſe four Heads: 1. His reſigning all to God, when he called him from his own Country, depending, without

any Expoſtulation or Reſerve, on his Authority and Promiſes. 2. Expecting many Years, no leſs than Thirteen, the Son that was promis'd him; and when that Promiſe was repeated after ſo long Expectation, he believ'd it with a full Aſſurance of Faith, againſt all natural Probability. 3. His conſenting, at God's Command, to ſacrifice this Son, on whoſe Life all God's Promiſes depended; ſatisfying all Objections with this, that God was able to raiſe him from the Dead. 4. Depending on the Accompliſhment of God's Promiſe, That in him all the Families of the Earth ſhou'd be bleſs'd. In the Three Firſt of theſe, 'tis plain, at the mention of 'em, Chriſt was not concern'd. The Fourth contain'd in its full meaning all the ſpiritual Bleſſings to be convey'd to Chriſt, and is apply'd in this Latitude by St. *Peter*: But as *Abraham* was particularly concern'd in it, it was no more than a Temporal Honour to his Family, as the Meſſiah ſhou'd be born of it. And the Three former of theſe Heads, only are inſiſted on by St. *Paul* in his Epiſtles to the *Romans* and *Hebrews*. From whence I think we have good Reaſon to conclude, That *Abraham*'s Faith was a general Faith in God, and as ſuch juſtify'd him.

Acts 2.26.

Rom. 4. Heb. 11.

Again, St. *Paul* in the End of the Tenth Chapter to the *Hebrews*, applies theſe Words of *Habakkuk*, 2. 4. *The juſt ſhall live by*

Habakkuk 2. 4.

by faith; Faith there is plainly Reſignation to God, and Truſt in him. The Perſon who has this Faith, is called Juſt, *i. e.* acceptable to God; and the Promiſe made to ſuch Faith, comprehends the Happineſs of both Worlds. In the Eleventh Chapter, the Apoſtle defines this Faith; *Faith*, he ſays, *is the ſubſtance of things hop'd for, the evidence of things not ſeen*, *i. e.* a Dependance upon God for what we have no Grounds to expect but his Authority, and giving Glory to him by a full Aſſurance of his Veracity and Power. When he has gone through a long Catalogue of Perſons eminent for ſuch Faith, he declares, *they obtain'd a good report*, *i. e.* were approv'd of God, and ſhou'd, though not yet, *be made perfect*. And in the Application to Chriſtians, in the Beginning of the Twelfth Chapter he adds, *Looking unto Jeſus the author and finiſher of our faith.* From whence it follows, both that Jeſus was not the Object of their Faith, and that he muſt be the Object of ours; that they were accepted upon a more general Faith; but we muſt add to that, this important Particular, which applies and animates the whole.

Again; In the ſixth Verſe the Apoſtle ſays, *Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God; for he that cometh to God muſt believe*, 1. *That he is*; 2. *That he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* From hence

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'tis obvious to conclude, that upon ſuch a Faith as this it is poſſible to pleaſe God, and conſequently to be acceptable to him. If therefore it be poſſible for one that never heard of Chriſt to have ſuch Faith; to believe the Being of a God, and a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, and conduct his Life by the Will of this God, heartily depending on his future Recompence; it is then poſſible for ſuch a Perſon to be acceptable to God. If while he is thus acceptable, God ſhould be pleas'd to reveal to him the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, he muſt either add to his former Faith in God, a ſuitable Faith in Chriſt, or elſe he forfeits his Integrity, and with that God's Favour: But if the Chriſtian Faith be never propos'd to him, never imaginable by him, his former Faith, if continued, will ſecure his future Happineſs.

Another Vindication of Chriſtianity.

Another Vindication of Chriſtianity in this Point, may be taken from St. *Paul*'s Epiſtle to the *Romans*; not from a ſingle Expreſſion, but from the whole Tenor and Deſign of the Epiſtle. As a Preface to this it may be obſerv'd, it does not appear that the *Jews* themſelves had ſuch Notions of the Heathen, as to leſſen the Glory of the Covenant of Redemption. They might think, and probably did, that they became Reprobate by their Idolatry and Vices, which St. *Paul* in the firſt Chapter of this Epiſtle

Epiſtle plainly aſſerts. But if this were all, even they don't countenance this Prejudice, becauſe they put their Acceptance or Reprobation upon a different Foot. And that this was their Notion, ſhould be allow'd upon a favourable Conſtruction of their Conduct: For without ſuppoſing this, what reaſonable Account can be given of their admitting ſuch a Thing as a Proſelyte of the Gate? If it were impoſſible for ſuch a Perſon to be in any meaſure acceptable to God, 'twou'd be grimacing both God and Man to admit ſuch a Character. But however, before they would admit a Heathen as a Member of their Church, they inſiſted upon more than this; and for this Reaſon were highly offended, that Heathens, not firſt proſelyted to their Religion, ſhould be admitted directly as God's People, by being baptiz'd into Chriſt. They ſeem'd to conſider Chriſt, thus repreſented, with as much Jealouſy as the *Romans* were perſuaded to; they ſeem'd to imagine he uſurp'd upon *Moſes*, as much as they wou'd have had him thought to uſurp upon *Cæſar*. In Anſwer to this, the Apoſtle ſhows 'em, that both *Jew* and *Gentile* were ſo far on a Level, that neither could claim Acceptance by his own Innocence; the *Jew* did not ſatisfy the Law of *Moſes*, no more than the Heathen did the Law of Nature. Suppoſing the beſt, the Defect of each muſt be

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ſupply'd by ſome other Principle, or elſe both muſt be condemn'd; *all have fallen ſhort of the Glory of God, all are juſtify'd freely by his Grace*, i. e. his Favour, his gracious Acceptance of their Faith inſtead of perfect Righteouſneſs; their faithful Reſignation was accepted for the Sake of Chriſt, tho' failing in many Particulars. This being premis'd, it is next to be inſiſted on, that the Deſign of this Epiſtle is allow'd to be this; To convince the *Jews* of the Reaſonableneſs of God's grafting the Heathen into his Church, which was now not to be *Jewiſh*, but Chriſtian; not National, but Oecumenical. The *Jews* conſider'd the Heathen of all Ages and Nations, while entirely unproſelyted, as unexceptionably Reprobate, as Fuel for the Flames of Hell. While they thought 'em ſo, they might well wonder to ſee Apoſtles addreſs to 'em, and invite 'em into the Chriſtian Church. And nothing could be more proper to obviate ſuch a Preſumption, than the general Repreſentation that is here made. The Apoſtle allows, in the firſt Chapter, that the State of the Heathen World had been very deplorable; they had generally been thrown off by God, generally given up to a reprobate Mind. But were the *Jews* innocent? The ſecond Chapter ſhows they were far from it. He then inſiſts in behalf of ſuch Heathens, as had been ſober and virtuous,

Rom. 1. 17.

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(for ſuch ſure there always were, how few ſoever) that they were regarded by God as worthy of his Favour, and therefore why not now? To ſuppoſe God's Regard to be confin'd to a particular Diſpenſation, is too narrow, too partial a Principle. Virtue, though not within the Commonwealth of *Iſrael*, was always acceptable to him; it never loſt its Reward, though he did not think fit, till now, to offer it the eminent Favours of the Goſpel. He had his univerſal Diſtributions before: He gave the *Jews* great Advantages in the Means of Virtue, and they ſhall therefore have the foremoſt Claſs, according to their Conduct, whether in Happineſs or Miſery. But the *Gentiles* ſhall find Juſtice too: There is no Reſpect of Perſons with God; none ſuch as affects the other World: He's pleas'd to indulge National Reſpect, ſuch as may affect this World as the Way to that; but his Juſtice ſtill keeps an inviolable Proportion; he'll judge all Men at the laſt Day, by the Uſe they have made of thoſe Means they have enjoy'd. They, who had no Laws from Heaven, no Rule but natural Faith; if they obſerve that Rule, they ſhall be juſtify'd and rewarded; they were never unexceptionably rejected: Such was always God's impartial Juſtice; a virtuous Heathen was always more acceptable to him than a vicious *Jew*. This Repreſentation is the Medium

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by which St. *Paul* propoſes to take off the Surprize and Indignation of the *Jews*, at their being call'd to Chriſtianity: He takes his Riſe from a perſonal Compariſon, conſidering each in their former State. When he has thus removed this fundamental Prejudice, he proceeds to other Arguments in the following Chapters. In this ſecond Rom. 2. Chapter, he urges the former State both of *Jews* and Heathens. He ſhows 'em, there was no ſuch abſolute Reprobation of the Heathen, or Election of the *Jew*, as their uncharitable Fondneſs for their own Privileges might conceive. Nothing hindred their being comprehended under one common Covenant. For ſince the Heathen were always juſtify'd by God, if they obſerv'd the Law under which they liv'd; and the *Jews* always condemn'd, if they neglected theirs; they were ſo far on a Level, equally capable of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation; as the one was as capable of believing in Chriſt as the other, and nothing but Faith in him was requir'd to their Admiſſion.

A Reply anſwer'd. 'Tis ſometimes ſuppos'd a ſufficient Reply to this, to ſay, that St. *Paul* aſſerts only, That they may be juſtify'd, if they become Chriſtian. But this is to ſet aſide the whole Deſign of the Epiſtle: This the *Jews* did not deny in general; but they inſiſted on their being introduc'd to Chriſt by *Moſes*. They look'd on 'em as unholy Things; they

they were firſt to be conſecrated by Circumciſion, before they could become an Oblation. They were ſo notorious for this Principle, that it wants no Proof. The Queſtion therefore is not, What would be the Effect of their becoming Chriſtians; but whether, being mere Heathens, they ſhould be allow'd to become Chriſtians, or not? And their being juſtify'd by God, upon their faithful Obſervance of the Law they liv'd under, is the Medium to prove, that they might, upon believing in Chriſt, be admitted to this farther Favour: They might be receiv'd into the Chriſtian Church, without being firſt purified in the Temple. To ſave any Appearance of an Argument, we muſt ſuppoſe him to compare *Jews* and *Gentiles*, not as converted, but in their diſtinct States; not in their preſent Characters, but their former. He ſuppoſes the *Gentile* to *do by Nature the Things contained in the Law.* *Ver.* 14. This State of Nature, upon their Converſion, ceas'd; and therefore, this muſt refer to their former Condition: And the Apoſtle expreſly ſays, *Ver.* 13. ſuch ſhall be juſtify'd. And Juſtification, here, does not mean their being received into the Chriſtian Church; but being accepted by God as righteous. The Diſtinction I have before obſerv'd in Salvation, will be found to be exactly applicable to Juſtification likewiſe; and the Temporal, or Eccleſiaſtical Senſe,

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much more frequently us'd than the Eternal: But however, the Eternal is the Senſe of it in this Place; as will appear from the 12th Verſe, join'd to the 16th, the intermediate Verſes being a Parentheſis. *As many as have ſinned without Law, ſhall alſo periſh without Law; and as many as have ſinned in the Law, ſhall be judged by the Law; in the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men, according to my Goſpel.* And as the Sinners ſhall be thus condemn'd, the Doers of the Law muſt be concluded (from natural Equity) to be juſtify'd, in the ſame Manner, and at the ſame Time. But however, 'tis expreſly aſſerted in the 13th Verſe; and if ſo, why not become God's People by Faith?

A General Objection anſwer'd.

This, I think, is the Apoſtle's Reaſoning; and 'tis both ſtrong, and clear. But there is one General Objection againſt the Truth eſtabliſh'd by it, which may ſeem to ſtrengthen the Prejudice I have endeavour'd to remove; that is, That ſome, who allow that Heathens will not be puniſh'd for what's not in their Power; and others, who allow they ſhall not be miſerable; yet inſiſt, that they have no Title to Salvation. The Reaſon given by both is, in the Concluſion, the ſame; which is, that they find no Promiſe made them in Scripture. But ſome begin their Proof ſooner. Salvation, they ſay, is a Reward; and no Man can be entitled

to Rewards, but by Merit, or by Promiſe. It is rightly ſuppos'd, that Merit will not be pretended to; ſo that the whole Title muſt reſt upon ſome Promiſe. Salvation, whether in the univerſal or peculiar Senſe, may be allow'd properly a Reward. God is ſaid to *reward every man according to his works*; and again, he is call'd *the rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*: Which Words, by the way, ſhew, that Natural Faith is capable of ſome Reward; and not thro' any Merit of its own, but by Promiſe. But this Promiſe is in vain expected in the New Teſtament. Would it not be ſtrange, to find expreſs Promiſes made in that, to Perſons, who are ſuppos'd (by the Nature of the Subject) never to have it in their Power to hear any Thing of it? The New Teſtament conſiſts partly of what was actually preach'd by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and partly of what was occaſionally written; excepting ſuch Hiſtorical Paſſages as can't concern this Queſtion. What was preach'd, was urg'd for the Converſion both of *Jews* and Heathens, but not ſuch as are here ſuppos'd; for they were laid under an immediate Obligation, by the Evidence of ſuch Preaching, to believe explicitly in Chriſt. What was written, was intended to correct Abuſes and Miſtakes, to promote Piety and Zeal, to obviate Temptations ariſing from Perſecutions: All this was apply'd

to ſuch as did actually believe. But what Room can there be, either in ſuch Preaching or Writing, to inſiſt upon Promiſes or Declarations, concerning ſuch as never could hear of Chriſt? To tell Heathens, how God would deal with ſuch Perſons, could be of no Uſe to them; becauſe, upon Preaching the Goſpel to 'em, it immediately ceas'd to be their Caſe. To intrude it into their writing upon other Subjects, might look like Indigence of Matter, and divert the proper End of their Epiſtles; except it happen'd to be Part of that End, by being made the Subject of ſome Miſtake to be corrected; which, I think, I have ſhewn to have been St. *Paul*'s Point, in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*. And from hence it has happen'd, that tho' the Promiſes of the Goſpel are not directed to Heathens, yet they are not quite deſtitute of ſome Evidence in their Favour in the New Teſtament. But if they were, it ought ſurely to be inſiſted on by all Chriſtians, that there is a Catholick Promiſe that comprehends them. It will not be ſaid, that the Merits of Chriſt had their Effects only from the Time of his Crucifixion; it will probably be allow'd, when ſeriouſly conſider'd, that they commenc'd (in ſome meaſure) from the Commencement of the Covenant of Redemption. And is there not a Promiſe on God's Part, of Mercy to Mankind in general, in

Tit. 1. 2.

that

that Covenant? And what can that Mercy be? I take it for granted, the Perſons I am here concern'd with, will not chuſe Annihilation: And if it be not that, it muſt be ſome Happineſs, *i. e.* ſome Degree of Salvation. Matt. 11. 24.

Tho' I have all along induſtriouſly avoided Quotations, I muſt beg leave here to inſert a few Lines from the Great Dr. *Hammond*, in his *Practical Catechiſm*, p. 5. He ſays, "God promis'd, in the Second Co-"venant, the giving of Chriſt, to ſatisfy "for the Sin of *Adam*, and for all the Sins "of all Mankind. Upon this Foundation, "he ſays, (*p.* 11.) both *Jew* and *Gen-"tile* (that is, every Man that ever was, "or ſhall be ſav'd from the Beginning of "the World) was, and is, and ſhall be ſa-"ved by this Second Covenant." I ſhall only obſerve here, that by the Second Covenant, the Doctor means the Covenant of Redemption. This Chriſt graciouſly enter'd into with the Father, in Behalf of Men: 'Twas in their Hands, whether it ſhould obtain the good End propos'd by it, or not. But ſome Effect it had independent of 'em, and that very conſiderable; no leſs than the Expiation of the paſt Guilt, and all future Imperfections that were its neceſſary Conſequence; all which the Doctor juſtly imputes to it. And all this muſt be to no purpoſe, if they who are faithful in perform-

ing what they can poſſibly know of God's Will, are not entitled by ſuch Performance to ſome Happineſs. Such a Covenant, therefore, muſt contain a Promiſe of it, and conſequently of Salvation, as that Word is underſtood at large.

Whatever Severity muſt be imputed to the *Jews* in this Queſtion, may be ſuppos'd careleſly contracted from the Caution uſed in their Law, to keep them from being corrupted by their Idolatries; and from the Reſentments expreſs'd againſt their general Abominations. But ſhould we ſuppoſe all, even to a Man, to periſh without Mercy, 'twould however be highly injurious to the Redeemer of the World, to ſuppoſe them under any ſuch Neceſſity.

As to the Fathers of the Chriſtian Church, whoſe Authority muſt be allow'd conſiderable in all Religious Subjects; except *Juſtin Martyr*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and *Chryſoſtom*, the general Stream is confeſs'd to run againſt the Salvation of Heathens. But where-ever this Judgment cannot be otherwiſe accounted for, (if there be any ſuch Inſtances) it may perhaps be in ſome meaſure excus'd, by the great Hardſhips which both the Chriſtian Church and Doctrine had ſuffer'd from them: They might be provok'd to this Severity, with reſpect to the perſonal Conduct of all Heathens in general,

ral, and yet not exclude them from the Covenant of Redemption, nor ſubject 'em to any unreaſonable Conditions. And where they impute their Damnation to the want of the Chriſtian Faith, they may deſign the Concluſion againſt ſuch only as liv'd ſince the Incarnation, and had ſufficient Evidence.

What has been ſaid upon this Subject, may, I hope, clear Chriſtianity from this Charge of Barbarity: It may, I hope, prevent any Man's Faith from being ſhock'd by ſuch a Prejudice; and, at the ſame Time, cut off all the Encouragement that may have been taken, from too looſe an Account of it, by thoſe who live under the ſtricteſt Obligations of the Goſpel, to indulge any Latitude or Lukewarmneſs in the Chriſtian Faith: And it may be explain'd and eſtabliſh'd, by what follows in the next Chapter.

CHAP. VI.

God no Reſpecter of Perſons: Or, The Inequality of his Diſpenſations to the ſeveral Ages, explain'd and juſtify'd.

SOME Diſſatisfaction may poſſibly remain, and God's ſpiritual Providence may be charg'd with Partiality, from the great Difference he has made among Mankind, and from Chriſt's being ſo late Incarnate. As to the Meſſiah's Incarnation's being ſo late, determin'd to the laſt Age, the original Effect of his Death being ſecur'd to all former Generations, this effectually anſwers all Diſcontents with reſpect to his Expiation: For, from hence it follows, that no Part of Mankind have been left under any Neceſſity of becoming miſerable. This great Point I have had Occaſion to ſpeak of before, and therefore, ſhall here only produce one Argument, not then inſiſted on. St. *John* declares him *the Propitiation, not for our Sins only, but for the Sins of the whole World.* In the for-

1 John 2. 2.

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mer Verſe, he had deliver'd a very comfortable Doctrine, that Chriſtians have *an Advocate with the Father*: That if they are faithful in endeavouring to diſcharge their Duty, their accidental Sins ſhould find Mercy, by the Intereſt and Merits of that Advocate, *Jeſus Chriſt the righteous; he is our Propitiation*, he has aton'd for ſuch Sins.

But the good Apoſtle ſeems to recollect himſelf; he ſeems to apprehend, he might be underſtood to the Diſhonour of his Maſter, as if he ſuppos'd him a Propitiation for Chriſtians only: He therefore adds, his Propitiation is univerſal; *not for ours only, but alſo for the Sins of the whole World.* In theſe Words, therefore, we have a moſt magnificent Character of our Saviour, comprehending in his Merits the whole Race of Mankind; not only the *Jew*, but the *Gentile* likewiſe; not only ſuch as enjoy'd the Advantage of living under the Goſpel, but all former Generations, from the Foundation of the World, *i. e.* from the firſt of Mankind, from *Adam* himſelf, to the laſt of his Poſterity.

God's Oeconomy.

The Oeconomy of God ſeems plainly this: As Men may be happy in this World, tho' not bleſs'd with a common Proportion of External Aſſiſtances, nor qualify'd by the Improvements of the beſt Education, for the real Perfections of human Life; ſo they

they may likewiſe in the other, tho' not educated to it by the cleareſt Revelations, and moſt advantageous Inſtitutions, not prepar'd for it by all the Accompliſhments of a faithful Chriſtian. There are various Degrees of Happineſs in that regular Diſpoſition of Bliſs and Glory: Great is the Goodneſs of God to thoſe who enjoy all the Advantages of the Goſpel; but the faithful Endeavours of thoſe Spirits, who differ from us only in the Providential Varieties of this State of Probation, ought not to be deſpis'd. They who claim'd the Earth, as the peculiar Property of Saints, went too far; but they who would monopolize Heaven upon that Title, are far more unreaſonable, and more unnatural Uſurpers. The General Privilege obtain'd by Chriſt, our Acceptance upon our Faithfulneſs in our Duty, is common to all Mankind; the ſame Means of Improvement are not; they are varied in the ſeveral Ages, as ſeems fit to the Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God. The Foundation of all Capacity of Happineſs in any Part of Mankind, is the abſolute Mercy of God in Chriſt: Men are in general deliver'd from neceſſary Miſery, the Conſequence of the Corruption of their Nature deſerted by God; they are reſtor'd to this Capacity of Happineſs without Diſtinction. The Degrees of that Happineſs depend on the Qualifications of their Souls; and theſe Quali-

Qualifications will depend, in a great meaſure, on the Circumſtances of their Lives, more or leſs aſſiſted either with natural or ſupernatural Advantages. St. *Paul* freely allows the *Jews* to inſiſt on the Advantage of their Law, on the Profit of Circumciſion, *i. e.* of being admitted by it into God's Church, providing they keep that Law, and don't ſuffer their Circumciſion to degenerate by tranſgreſſing it; and he directs 'em to the principal Advantage, their having committed to 'em the Oracles of God. As much therefore as the Revelations and Favours of the Goſpel exceed thoſe of the Law, ſo much do the Advantages of Chriſtians exceed thoſe of a *Jew*; and ſo much may their Advances in Religion and Happineſs exceed his; but however, his Advances ſhall not loſe their Reward. And for the ſame Reaſon, a virtuous Heathen, that has no other Oracles but the obſcure ones of Nature, ſhall be proportionably rewarded for faithful Obedience to 'em; though for want of better Inſtructions, he could make no great Advances in the ſpiritual Perfections of Life.

The general Queſtion to be determin'd at the laſt ſolemn Day is this, Whether Men ſhall be receiv'd into Heaven, or caſt out with the Devil and his Angels; for ever baniſh'd from God, and from all Capacity of Happineſs? The general Foundation on which

which this important Queſtion is to be determin'd, is the Faithfulneſs or Perverſeneſs of their Conduct; their having faithfully perform'd what they cou'd know of their Duty, or having been careleſly and wantonly proſtituted to Impiety. If the Heathen has obſtinately indulg'd any Humour, which he knew to be unnatural; if the *Jew* has diſpens'd with his Obedience, where he knew the Law requir'd it; if the Chriſtian wilfully neglects any Duty, which he ſees enjoin'd him in the Goſpel; if any Man thus offend in one Point, and do not recover himſelf by Submiſſion and Reformation, he's certainly condemn'd: But he ſhall be more or leſs unhappy, in Proportion to the Number and Influence of his Sins. And on the contrary, if any of theſe faithfully abhor all Vice as ſuch, and heartily perform ſuch Particulars of Piety and Virtue, as their Judgment and Conſcience, upon ſerious and full Examination, recommend, he ſhall certainly be juſtify'd: But he ſhall be more or leſs advanc'd in Heaven, in Proportion to the Number and Influence of his good Actions and Qualities. Their Happineſs or Miſery, their Juſtification or Condemnation in general, depends on their faithful Obedience, or wilful Unrighteouſneſs. This Faithfulneſs implies, that they have us'd all reaſonable Endeavours to know God's Will, and ſubmitted to what they knew

Matt. 11. 24.

1 Cor. 15. 58.

knew of it, without Exception or Reluctance. When they have done this, they have done all in their Power; and then, however imperfect they may be, the Covenant of Redemption takes place in their Favour.

If one Man ſits in Judgment upon another, 'tis very difficult, if not impoſſible, to ſay where there has been ſuch Faithfulneſs, and where not; and therefore no Man can form any Judgment of this Kind, but in general, and upon proper Suppoſitions: But God having a diſtinct View of the Heart, and a perfect Knowledge of the Means and Capacities of each ſingle Man, he paſſes a Judgment on the infinite Variety of Caſes, Righteous and Infallible.

This Judgment of neceſſity refers to the State and Circumſtances in which Men live. To judge a Heathen by the Law of *Moſes*, or a *Jew* by the Goſpel, or a Chriſtian by the Conduct of Angels, would be a certain Way to condemn 'em; but 'twou'd be condemning an Eye for not hearing, and an Ear for not ſeeing. Faithfulneſs contains all the Duties of each ſingle Man, but thoſe Duties are not the ſame in all; but under different Diſpenſations, have different Subjects to work on; and from thence will proceed various Degrees of ſpiritual Perfection: But however, the Faithfulneſs of all may be equally perfect, tho' the Men themſelves are not,

not. As to this Propoſition, if it be ever inſiſted on, the Favour of God does in the ſame Meaſure follow all equal Degrees of Faithfulneſs. If Favour ſignifies only an abſtracted Metaphyſical Approbation, it may be true, as God upon the Review of the Creation pronounc'd all Things, without Diſtinction, very good: But as to all Effects, he deals differently with Things differing in their real Perfections.

The Patriarch, the *Iſraelite*, the Chriſtian, the Heathen, may all be faithful in their Obedience, and yet differ very much in the Duties they perform, and the Improvements which they make by performing 'em. St. *Paul* gives us a Heathen's Creed in theſe two Articles; 1. That there is a God. 2. That he is the Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him. If therefore he proceeds on ſuch a Faith as this to ſeek God, *i. e.* to recommend himſelf to him by the Practice of ſuch Things, as his Reaſon can diſcover to be acceptable to ſuch a Being, and by a conſcientious Abſtinence from all it can diſcover to be offenſive to him; his Faithfulneſs is compleat, tho' he fall ſhort in the Matter of his Duty, of all that live by Revelations. But ſhould a *Jew* be ſatisfy'd with the ſame natural Duties, ſhould he wilfully neglect the various Precepts of the Law, while in Force, he would be juſtly condemn'd; becauſe the Authority

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of God is as much concern'd in the Poſitive Duties, as 'tis in the Natural; and where his Authority is deſpis'd, no natural Duties can poſſibly be perform'd religiouſly, nor can ſuch a Perſon pretend to religious Faithfulneſs in performing 'em. Accordingly, ſhou'd a Chriſtian, by a retrograde backſliding Superſtition, put on the *Jewiſh* Yoke; ſhou'd he be as punctual as a *Phariſee* in the Pomp and Slavery of Externals, and at the ſame time neglect ſuch Duties as are requir'd in the Goſpel; ſhould he have no Regard to Chriſt as his Redeemer, entertain no Concern for the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, take no Care to worſhip God in Spirit and in Truth; in this Caſe, all his Parade of Ceremonies would juſtly be condemn'd as humourſome Impertinencies, and Chriſt wou'd declare, that he knew him not.

The Law of Nature therefore to the Heathen unavoidably continuing ſuch; the Law of *Moſes* to the *Jew*, while in Force; the Law of Chriſt to the Chriſtian, and all that ſhould be ſuch, is the Will of God; and their Faithfulneſs depends on their Obedience to that Will, as expreſs'd to 'em. The Laws of God are proper Directions in all States in which they are given, for the Improvement of human Nature, and therefore all Degrees of ſuch Directions are great Bleſſings; but where he's not pleas'd to give 'em, he will not condemn Men for the Want of 'em.

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They can be concern'd no farther, than to obſerve ſuch Laws as they have; and their Faithfulneſs, *i. e.* the Compleatneſs of their Obedience, muſt be meaſur'd, not by the eſſential Capacities of their Nature, which by a ſuitable Education might poſſibly be carry'd a great deal farther, but by thoſe Laws: And 'tis both our Intereſt and our Duty to obſerve from hence, That in Proportion to the Degree of Light and Strength vouchſaf'd by God, greater Improvements may be made; and in Proportion to thoſe Improvements, greater Happineſs hereafter enjoy'd. This is the true Foundation of all thoſe triumphant Celebrations of God's Goodneſs to Chriſtians, which we find ſo affectionately expreſs'd in the New Teſtament.

The juſt Concluſion from hence.

This ſhould raiſe a ſuitable Concern in Chriſtians to walk worthy of their Vocation; to make good Uſe of their Advantages; to ſecure the Glories they have in View. But nothing of this Kind ſhould be underſtood to charge God with an arbitrary Exception of the major Part of Mankind from all Capacity of Happineſs. But 'tis a Beauty in Providence, to advance in the Diſpenſations of Religion; to propoſe various Perfections in Piety and Virtue upon Earth, and anſwer 'em with reſpective Promotions in Heaven.

God,

God, for the Sake of Chriſt, embraces all that have been faithful in the Duties propos'd to 'em, with the Affection of a wiſe and impartial Father; and diſpoſes of 'em in the other World, as he ſees 'em qualify'd. But ſince different Improvements, and conſequently different Degrees of Happineſs depending on 'em, are ſo far determin'd by the Means differently diſpens'd, that the Heathen, the *Jew*, and the Chriſtian, ſuppoſing their Faithfulneſs and their Application equal, will of Neceſſity differ in their Improvements and Happineſs; it may be inſiſted, How can ſuch different Diſpenſations of thoſe Means be free from Partiality? *An Objection,*

To which it may be anſwer'd, The Scheme of God's Religious Providence was laid without any perſonal Regard; his Wiſdom ſaw, no doubt, ſufficient Reaſon for all Parts of it: But that Reaſon was not taken from any Affection he had for one Generation of Men, conſider'd in themſelves, more than for another; and tho' Men will be perſonally affected by 'em, yet 'tis in the firſt place to be obſerv'd, no Puniſhment, no Miſery is imply'd in this. And this takes off the greateſt Part of that Horror, that may at firſt be conceiv'd from it. And then, Secondly, What Preference is imply'd in Perfection and Happineſs, can no more reflect on God's impartial Righteouſneſs, than the various Degrees of Perfection in any other *Anſwer'd.*

other Parts of the Creation. The Degrees of his Diſpenſations of Grace are as beautiful, as the various Orders in the Univerſe: Nor has any inferior Subject of 'em any Reaſon to complain of the leaſt Injury done 'em. Were any to be miſerable for Want of what was arbitrarily deny'd 'em, and freely granted others; this would be a Diſtinction that might ſeem unaccountable: But unleſs it could appear, that all God's Rational Creatures have a natural Right, as ſuch, to equal Perfections, and conſequently equal Happineſs, the Variety of religious Diſpenſations is unexceptionable. For ſince, ſuppoſing different natural Perfections, and at the ſame time equal Faithfulneſs and Application in the Uſe of 'em, the neceſſary Conſequence will be different Degrees of Happineſs; the ſame Exception, were it indeed any, would follow from thence: For ſuch Perfections are but Means, tho' internal; and if internal Means of Happineſs may be variouſly diſpens'd, external undoubtedly may.

All Men are indiſpenſibly bound to perform their Duty; but that Duty is not the ſame in all: And accordingly all that perform their Duty ſhall certainly be happy, but not all in the ſame Degree. If ſome Men were glorify'd without regard to their Behaviour, and others condemn'd after the beſt Uſe of all their Faculties, this would

be a moſt diſconſolate Myſtery. But God's riſing in his Favours in one Age higher than in another, only anſwers to the regular Progreſs of Perfections in other Parts of the World. As there are mere Animals without the Capacities of Rational Minds, as has been before obſerv'd; and above them, Rational Minds confin'd to the Incumbrances of Fleſh and Blood; and again, Above theſe, more perfect Minds, free from thoſe Incumbrances; and the Happineſs of all reſpectively diſpos'd: So we may adore the Wiſdom of God, from the Happineſs of the meaneſt of virtuous Heathens, to that of the moſt glorious Archangel. And for a full Anſwer to all Suſpicions of Partiality, we may change the Proſpect; we may view the proportionate Progreſs of his Juſtice, from his Vengeance on wicked Heathens, to the conſummate Miſeries of *Beelzebub*, the Prince of the Devils.

Scripture Expreſſions of this Kind conſider'd.

Nor do thoſe Expreſſions in Scripture, which may at firſt ſound like Partiality, indeed contain any other than what has been repreſented. The general Miſtake ariſing from the Miſinterpretation of ſuch Expreſſions, is a Principle ſo favourable to the Inclinations of Mankind, that 'tis no wonder it ſhould ſpread: It is this, That the Favour of God is arbitrary, and eternal Happineſs the Effect of it as ſuch: A Favour, that

either has no Regard to perſonal Qualifications, or elſe effectually produces 'em.

There are a great Number of Authorities brought for this from the Epiſtles of St. *Paul:* But the Deſign of thoſe Epiſtles plainly proves, that Temporal Salvation and Juſtification are miſtaken for Eternal. The Apoſtle labours to make Chriſtians, particularly ſuch as had been Heathens, ſenſible of God's Goodneſs in having call'd 'em out of Darkneſs into his marvelous Light, from the Power of Satan to himſelf: And one great Topick inſiſted on, is, That they were not in themſelves better than the reſt of Mankind; 'twas not their perſonal Merit that diſtinguiſh'd 'em, 'twas the Grace or Favour of God: *Behold,* ſays he, *the goodneſs and ſeverity of God: to them who fell, ſeverity; but to thee goodneſs, if thou continue in his goodneſs: if not, thou alſo ſhalt be cut off.* This Goodneſs therefore was not final: The Salvation by Grace, as 'tis oppos'd by St. *Paul* to Works, *Epheſ.* 2. and *Titus* 3. relates only to their being called to Chriſtianity by God's good Pleaſure: They could not boaſt of their Righteouſneſs; they were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins; they were without God in the World.

Rom. 11. 22.

By the ſame Miſtake, a great Part of St. *Paul's* Epiſtle to the *Romans* has been the Subject of much Contention: The Apoſtle has been underſtood to deſcribe God's perſonal

ſonal Determinations concerning eternal Happineſs, abſolutely fixing on the particular Perſons that ſhould enjoy that arbitrary Favour mention'd before. But he is not treating of eternal Salvation; he is not peopling Heaven, but only the Chriſtian Church: His Buſineſs is to juſtify God's calling the *Gentiles* into it, and for the preſent turning off the *Jews*. The eighth and ninth Chapters of that Epiſtle are fill'd with this Argument; and the Foundations which he builds upon it, ſhow that it relates only to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as Competitors at that Time; and only to their preſent Relation to God as his People, not to their future Happineſs.

God's Declaration to *Moſes*, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*, related to Temporal and National Bleſſings; and therefore in this Application of it muſt be ſo underſtood.

The arbitrary Preference of *Jacob* to *Eſau* was not true in a perſonal Senſe, but in their Poſterity only as Nations; and that Poſterity was, as now, rejected, tho' before choſen; and therefore it could be only temporal.

The Inſtance of *Pharaoh* can be underſtood only of his Life and Fortunes; God firſt rais'd him up to make this providential Uſe of him.

And the Example of the Potter, as to his Power over Clay, is leſs reconcilable to this Principle than any of the former: A ſpiritual Concluſion from this would be groſsly falſe, for it muſt proceed thus; A Potter don't injure the Clay, whatever he makes it; therefore God don't injure a Rational and Immortal Spirit, in making it neceſſarily miſerable for ever. Clay is incapable of Injury; ſuch a Spirit is not: The Potter has no Rule but Intereſt; God has his Attributes. The Concluſion therefore muſt be to the Things of this Life; and all this Diſcourſe has only a temporal Meaning; and by this Interpretation, the Goodneſs of God, the Integrity of Chriſt's Merits, and univerſal Charity among Mankind, may be ſav'd from future Violence.

From hence likewiſe we may conclude, what's to be underſtood by thoſe Goſpel Terms, the Elect, the Children of God, and the like; and, by the ſame Rule, vindicate theſe from excluding thoſe who liv'd under more imperfect Diſpenſations, from all Intereſt in God thro' Chriſt: They exclude ſuch only as were then excluded for Want of Faith; nor do they abſolutely ſecure the Subjects of 'em of God's eternal Favour; they deſcribe only a preſent Relation to him. *Many*, ſays Chriſt, *are call'd, but few are choſen.* Few are ſo well diſpos'd to embrace that Goſpel that's offer'd univer-

univerſally, as to become my Diſciples. The Elect therefore were the Members of the Chriſtian Church, the happy Few that obey'd God's Call. Accordingly St. *Paul* ſays, *That he endures all things for the ſake of the Elect*, i. e. for the ſake of the Church. That nothing more is imply'd in this Title, is plain from the following Words, *That they may obtain Salvation*; for 'tis certain ſome relaps'd. As therefore they who were call'd, were many of 'em not choſen; ſo they that were choſen, might many of them not prove faithful to the End. Accordingly, to compleat the Character of thoſe who are with the Lamb, theſe Titles are all put together; they that are with him, are *call'd, and choſen, and faithful.* 2 Tim. 2, 10. Rev. 17. 14.

To conclude this Point: The Advantages of the Goſpel need not be ſet off with any unmerciful Sentences on the reſt of Mankind. Great is the Indulgence of God to Chriſtians; bright is that Crown of Righteouſneſs that's laid up for 'em. But that Indulgence conſiſts in giving us the Means of a more eminent Perfection in Piety and Virtue: That Crown is propos'd as an Encouragement to us, to make a wiſe and faithful Uſe of thoſe Means. Let us therefore conſider, what Relation we are at preſent in to God; and what muſt be the Conſequence of our Conduct in it. On the one hand, a glorious Enjoyment of the Life of

Heaven, with a full Aſſurance of being ſettled in it beyond all Danger. On the other, the Abomination of Miſery, the Blackneſs of Darkneſs for ever, without any Hopes, any Proſpect of Relief.

What can deſerve the Name of a Temptation, in the Preſence of ſuch Hopes and Fears? Art thou almoſt overcome, juſt ready to reſign to the Luſts of the Fleſh, the Luſts of the Eye, or the Pride of Life? Look up once more to Heaven, and conſider what thou art going to forſake. If this don't recover thee, caſt thine Eyes down, as ſuch Wretches ſhould do for Shame, caſt 'em down to the Depths of Hell, and conſider, to what thou art going to aſſign thy Soul.

But I am ſenſible, this Part of God's Diſpenſations, inſtead of anſwering the End his Goodneſs propos'd by it, is too often made an Objection againſt Chriſtianity it ſelf: As ſuch, it ſhall be conſider'd in the next Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Eternal Puniſhments conſider'd and vindicated.

THE remaining Objection to this Part of Chriſtianity, taken from the Sanctions of the Chriſtian Covenant, will always amaze human Minds, from the very Nature of Eternity. Tho' this is a Difficulty common to both States: The Eternity of Happineſs is eaſily receiv'd, but an Eternity of Miſery is frequently thought too ſevere. Too many engage againſt a future eternal State in general. The Nature of Good and Evil, and the indiſputable Attributes of God, make it to them a melancholick, uncomfortable Proſpect; they have no Hopes of being happy in it, and are therefore very willing to conclude there's no ſuch thing. But theſe are not the Perſons for whom I am concern'd; and indeed they who place themſelves on a Level with the Beaſts that periſh, ſcarce deſerve more Regard, than the Character they take upon 'em. Others, who entertain no Doubt concerning Life and Immortality, can by no means digeſt eternal Puniſhments. And

ſome of theſe, to clear the Chriſtian Revelation, diſpute their being reveal'd in Scripture, and put ſofter Senſes upon thoſe Places that threaten 'em. Others allow 'em to be reveal'd, as a Terror to evil Doers; but they think God's Goodneſs may diſpenſe with the Severity of his Laws. I ſhall give my Reaſons, why I can't conſent to either of theſe Methods of removing this Prejudice; and then endeavour ſome Satisfaction to thoſe Perſons, with whom the Fact hangs as a Milſtone upon their Faith.

As by Life and Immortality, the beſt Part of our Nature, the Honour, the Generoſity, the Gratitude, the Love and Hopes of Mankind, are all apply'd to in the moſt ſatisfactory manner; ſo they, who will not be mov'd by this, have need of very powerful Terrors; and 'tis happy where theſe have their Effect: they too often only fright Men at firſt, and then are loſt in Diverſions. But if God has reveal'd 'em, to work, if poſſible, upon the Fears upon Mankind, it becomes us to give 'em their due Weight; to remove every thing that might leſſen their Influence. As certainly, Charity is miſplac'd, where 'tis apply'd only to the Subſiſtence of Idleneſs; ſo it muſt likewiſe be, where it tends only to the Encouragement of Vice, to make the Neglect of our Duty ſit more eaſy on our Minds.

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They who queſtion the Revelation of eternal Puniſhments, avoid the Force of Words that ſeem very plain, by their being us'd in a more reſtrain'd Senſe, where the Subject evidently requires it. The *Jewiſh* Law is ſaid to be eſtabliſh'd for ever; but unleſs we ſuppoſe eternal Generations upon Earth ſucceſſively ſubject to that Law, the Nature of the Thing at firſt View declares Eternity impoſſible. *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* are ſaid to ſuffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire: The Nature of the Subject-Matter here likewiſe explains immediately what's meant by Eternal, the entire Conſumption, or rather Diſſolution of that Matter; and yet the ſame Word is apply'd to God himſelf. It ſeems from hence reaſonable to conclude, that we muſt diſtinguiſh the Meaning of it by the Subject to which it is apply'd; and if ſo, then where 'tis apply'd to a Subject capable of a proper Eternity, that ſhould be underſtood to be its Meaning: And to all that acknowledge the Immortality of the Soul, this muſt be ſo far concluſive, That being made to continue for ever, the Nature of the Subject determines us; when any thing relating to that is ſaid to be Eternal, we ſhould underſtand a real, a ſtrict, a literal Eternity. The utmoſt that can be countenanc'd by ſuch Inſtances, is the Diſſolution of the Body. That may be ſuppos'd incapable of everlaſting Burnings; and

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according to its preſent Temper, it certainly is. But who can ſay, what Change may not be wrought in it by its Maker, at the General Reſurrection? That the Body accompanies the Soul in Hell, is plainly imMatt. 10. 28. ply'd by Chriſt; God's deſtroying both in it, is mention'd: He ſpeaks of the Miſeries of both, under one common Deſtruction. If, by God's deſtroying the Body, we underſtand his utterly conſuming, or diſſolving it; we muſt in Reaſon underſtand, by his deſtroying the Soul, his depriving it of all Being: But that is (at preſent) ſuppos'd falſe, by the Perſons to whom this Diſcourſe is directed; the Patrons of Annihilation are to be treated with, if at all, in their own wild way.

But Chriſt ſpeaks, I think, more plainly Mark 9. in the Ninth Chapter of St. *Mark*: He there perſuades his Diſciples to *pluck out a right Eye*, to *cut off a right Hand*, rather than ſuffer them to be the Inſtruments of Sin. This he proves to be their Intereſt, becauſe if they did not, *their whole Body would be caſt into Hell*; and, I think, implies, that its Torments there would be Eternal; becauſe *the worm* there *never dies*, *the fire is never quench'd*.

By the Worm, is uſually underſtood the Pangs of Conſcience: If that be right, the Fire, however, muſt reſpect the Body, and is repreſented permanent too. But 'tis probable,

bable, the Worm's never dying, and the Fire's never being quench'd, are meant both of the Body; referring to the Two different ways of Funerals, Interment, and Burning. Our Saviour ſpeaks only of the Body; he compares what it would ſuffer by doing what he commanded, with what it would ſuffer by not doing it. The great Aggravation of its Sufferings, is their Eternity. And he ſeems to prevent the Objection we are now upon, from the Nature of the Body: As if he had ſaid, It will not be then, as it is at preſent; it will then be incapable of conſuming, or diſſolving. In its natural State, the Worms may devour the whole, and dye for want of Nouriſhment; the Fire might conſume it, and be extinguiſh'd for want of Fuel: But in the other World, the Subſtance of the Body, tho' in it ſelf not incorruptible or inconſumable, ſhall be made ſo by the Fire it ſelf; that ſhall preſerve it from Corruption, or Conſumption. It ſhall be ſalted with Fire. Every Wretch ſhall be preſerv'd by that, as Fleſh uſually is by Salt. This appears to be the Senſe, by the Antitheſis; Every Sacrifice is ſalted with Salt; an Alluſion to the conſtant Practice of ſalting their Sacrifices. Every Sacrifice here, ſignifies every Perſon that has devoted himſelf to God; as St. *Paul* calls the Converſion of the *Gentiles*, the *offering of them up to God*. And, Rom. 15. 16.

to

to anſwer this, Salt here ſignifies the ſalutary Doctrines and Duties of Chriſtianity: And every ſuch Perſon is here declar'd immortal by them, and for the Sake of them. Tho' the Chriſtian Revelation is not particular, tho' it does not humour a Philoſophical Delicacy, theſe Words ſeem to give us a general Account how the Body, in this laſt State, ſhall be continued under the Flames of Hell, tho' not naturally Proof againſt their Violence; as it ſhould have been preſerv'd from Diſſolution in its original State, tho' not intrinſically immortal.

But ſhould it be ſuppos'd, that the Bodies of the wicked were loſt in the Grave, or conſum'd in the General Conflagration, or in the Flames of Hell; yet if their Spirits were eternally miſerable, and to the ſame Degree, (as they certainly may be without Bodies) what Comfort can there be in ſuch a Suppoſition? Whether the Body or the Soul be the immediate Subject of our Miſeries, is entirely indifferent; 'tis no more than removing a Pain out of one Limb into another, without aſſwaging it.

That the Miſeries of the wicked in general, whatever they conſiſt in, are Eternal; this might be prov'd by a Cloud of Witneſſes out of the New Teſtament; but I'll mention only Two: Thoſe Words of our Saviour's; *Theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting Puniſhment, but the righteous into Life*

Matt. 25. 46.

Life eternal: And thoſe of St. *Paul*; *For we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad: Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we perſwade men.* In our Saviour's Sentence, the Duration of the Puniſhment of the Wicked, and the Life of the Righteous, is expreſs'd in the Original by the ſame Word; and I refer to what has been already ſaid, for its true Meaning. In St. *Paul's*, we are determin'd to the ſame Senſe, by the laſt Verſe of the former Chapter; *The things which are ſeen are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.* Nor would any Thing leſs than that carry much Terror in it. 2 Cor. 5. 10, 11.

Some Perſons, who are unwilling to come into this Opinion, avoid ſuch Teſtimonies of Scripture. by flying to God's Goodneſs: They conclude, the worſt of Sinners may find Mercy; for who can ſet Bounds to Infinite Goodneſs? But, to this, the meaneſt Chriſtian may readily anſwer; That Infinite Goodneſs may ſet Bounds to it ſelf; and that it has done ſo in the Chriſtian Covenant.

Others acknowledge, this ſevere Vengeance is plainly threaten'd in Scripture; but they leſſen the Terror of it, by ſuppoſing it poſſible, that God may diſpenſe with

with it: That tho' he has denounc'd it to frighten Sinners, yet it may not be finally executed: That its being publiſh'd at preſent, may be of good Uſe; but when that Uſe can be carry'd no farther, it may be no longer inſiſted on. They ſatisfy themſelves in this Suppoſition, by comparing it with Human Government, and with God's own Providential Diſpenſations. Human Governors, when they have declar'd a Crime Capital, frequently pardon it; and God himſelf, when he had poſitively denounc'd Deſtruction upon *Nineveh*, relented, and ſav'd it. This is the whole Strength of this dangerous, charitable Preſumption.

The Natural Difference between the Two Worlds, deſtroys the Foundation of this Reaſoning, in both Caſes. As God's revealing the dreadful Conſequences of Sin in the other World, is on purpoſe to perſwade Men from it; ſo whenever he is pleas'd to give notice of any Judgments in this World, 'tis on purpoſe to reform thoſe on whom they're pronounc'd. If they did not ſuppoſe a Reſerve of Mercy upon Reformation, it would be uſeleſs to publiſh them. Their Execution, without any previous Notice, would anſwer all other Ends: That would ſatisfy God's Juſtice; that would make the Sinners an Example and Terror to others: That, if any Thing, would humble them.

Since,

Since, therefore, the only Uſe of God's threatning any Temporal Judgments, is the Converſion of the Sinner; ſuch Threatnings do, in their Nature, include a Pardon, upon a timely Converſion. Such a Sinner ſo converted, has as good Reaſon to expect God's Pardon and Protection, as if they had been promis'd him in Words at length. There was, therefore, nothing extraordinary in the Caſe of *Nineveh*; the Inhabitants repented, upon the Proſpect of God's Vengeance: Had they not repented, that Vengeance had certainly been executed.

The only Conſequence from hence, with reſpect to the Eternal Terror of the Lord, is this; If wicked Men are ſo heartily affected by it, as to humble themſelves before him, and return to their Duty, they ſhall deliver their Souls by their future Righteouſneſs. If all Sinners were thus converted, the Devil and his Angels would be the only Sufferers. But there's nothing in all this to countenance this Imagination, that God threatens what he don't deſign, or lays aſide his Deſign without Reaſon: And not to execute what he has threaten'd on obſtinate Sinners, muſt imply one of theſe. In this World, where every Thing is in Motion, every Thing imperfect, uncertain and changeable, the Diſpenſations of God vary according to the Reaſons of Things; and all his Judgments and Bleſſings,

ſings, till the Moment they take place, are Conditional; they depend upon infinite Suppoſitions, and are accompliſh'd or withdrawn accordingly. But in the other World, when God ſhall have pronounc'd upon the whole Courſe of Nature, It is finiſh'd; when every Thing ſhall be ſettled; when all Means ſhall be ſwallow'd up in the proper Ends, as the Rivers in the Sea; there remains nothing then but the Performance of thoſe Promiſes, and the Execution of thoſe Judgments, that have been long ſince reveal'd.

From hence may appear the Miſtake of reaſoning from Human Governors: They do indeed frequently diſpenſe with their own Laws; what they have condemn'd as worthy of Death, they frequently pardon. But if we examine the Reaſons upon which ſuch Pardons proceed, we ſhall find, that we can't apply them to God's Final Judgment, without Blaſphemy: And if we compare the Things themſelves, we ſhall find a vaſt Difference between them; the one makes only ſome Exceptions to a General Rule; the other deſtroys the Rule it ſelf, by excepting all the Particulars included in it.

In the Eſtabliſhment of Vindictive Juſtice among Men, Crimes muſt be conſider'd in their general, their abſtracted Malignity:

lignity: To cloath them with all their Circumſtances, would be impoſſible; theſe muſt be left to particular Occaſions: And as they come to be conſider'd, good Reaſon may appear, in ſome Caſes, to ſoften the Law, or to prevent its Execution. But where an Eſtabliſhment is to have its whole Effect at once, or elſe to be entirely deſtroy'd; there to diſpenſe with it, without any intervening Change of the State of Things, after it has been ſolemnly made and publiſh'd; this differs as much from the former Diſpenſations, as Humour from Reaſon. But were the Things themſelves more equal, we could not conclude from Human Governors to God. 'Twill eaſily be granted, that where this Practice is not juſtifiable in them, it muſt not be ſuppos'd of him. When it proceeds from human Infirmities, impos'd on by Craft or Importunity; and when it proceeds from vicious Cauſes, either Careleſneſs, or Partiality; in all ſuch Caſes, no Man will ſay, God may do it, becauſe Magiſtrates do.

But farther; where 'tis juſtifiable in Human Governors, the Reaſons that juſtify it, are not applicable to God.

Sometimes 'tis the Effect of a Virtuous Compaſſion, rais'd by ſome peculiar Circumſtances (not foreſeen) either in the Crime, or in the Criminal; and ſometimes 'tis owing to Political Prudence, when the

Publick Good may be eminently ſerv'd by it; or at leaſt, when a rigorous Execution of ſuch Laws might endanger the Publick Peace. God's Omniſcience prevents the former of theſe Reaſons having any Place in his Counſels, and his Omnipotence prevents the latter. Nothing can be of any Force, to prevent his executing the moſt ſevere Laws, that was not of equal Force to prevent his making them. Nothing new can ſurprize him; he ſees thro' the whole Order of Nature.

And as to Sinners themſelves, nothing can be ſaid in their Behalf to raiſe his Compaſſion. When we conſider them in general, every Thing that might (at firſt View) appear plauſible in their Favour, will be found, upon ſecond Thoughts, an Aggravation of their Guilt. Their Relation to him as his Creatures, the general Capacities of their Nature, and their having been the Care of his Grace and Providence; all theſe are big with Provocations. And as for the Difference of Guilt between particular Sinners, this will be conſider'd in the Number of their Stripes.

And how great ſoever the Number of ſuch Wretches may be, it can never be formidable to Almighty Power. Unleſs, therefore, we will ſuppoſe, that God threatens Eternal Puniſhments, tho' he don't deſign them; that he has declar'd he will do,

what he really will not; that he has deſcrib'd the other World very different from what it in Truth is: Unleſs we will aſſert theſe Things, which look very like Blaſphemies, we muſt allow, Nothing can ſave the Sinner, but his Converſion. If he lives and dies in his Sins, to flatter himſelf that the Conſequence will not be ſo terrible as the Scriptures repreſent it; that, ſome way or other, he ſhall be diſcharg'd from Miſery; this is as great a Vanity, as any his whole Life contains.

And ſince God is pleas'd to permit us to reaſon with him of his Judgments, we may ſafely do it with Seriouſneſs and Humility: And, I believe, the proper Method to be ſatisfy'd in this Part of them, is, to reflect on the Original State of Human Nature, together with the Effects of its Degeneracy and Reſtoration: Which having been all inſiſted on, I ſhall proceed here on References only.

And, Firſt, with reſpect to the Human Soul: It was created Immortal, *i. e.* of ſuch a Nature, as to be capable of continuing for ever, without any ſupernatural Suſtentation; and, by a regular Uſe of its Faculties, would have been eternally happy. But this State was much alter'd by the Diſobedience of our firſt Parents, and the Confuſion conſequent upon it. Suppoſing Mankind left to themſelves, as they

might moſt juſtly have been; there was no other Proſpect, but the State of the fallen Angels; when they dy'd, their Spirits had continued (like them) in obdurate Habits of Vice, and proportionable Miſery. God could not be conceiv'd under any Obligation to violate the Courſe of Nature in their Favour, and eaſe them of a Being that they had made miſerable. However, his Goodneſs would not ſtand neuter; but, upon proper Conditions, conſented to ſuch Indulgence and Aſſiſtances, as might place the Recovery of their Happineſs in their own Hands, upon the regular Courſe of their Nature; but, as was abſolutely neceſſary in Free Agents, with a Poſſibility of deſtroying it a ſecond Time, by making his Goodneſs uſeleſs. This is now the Caſe of all wicked Men; the Effect of their Redemption, is only an Aggravation of their Sins; and after a Life ſpent in vicious Habits, their Spirits (whether conſider'd with Bodies, or without) will naturally be miſerable, by the Influence and Effects of thoſe Habits. The Spirits of Men in a State of Rebellion againſt God, abus'd and perverted with vicious Habits, caſt off by their Maker, and leſt to the ſad Effects of their Corruptions; ſuch Spirits, when they came into the other World, when they found themſelves in a ſeparate State, odious to thoſe

thoſe bleſſed Spirits that had retain'd their Integrity, deſtitute of all Hopes of recovering Heaven, of reconciling themſelves to God, and enjoying their Nature in its firſt Perfection, continually worry'd by their wicked Inclinations, and continually growing more wicked and more miſerable by their increaſing their Dominion over them; ſuch Spirits would, no doubt, have been great Torments to themſelves, tho' the Juſtice of God had appointed them no other.

A more particular Proof of the permanent Force of Habits, ſhall hereafter be given: It may be ſufficient, at preſent, to appeal to Mens own Experience, as far as it can be had in this Life, and to the Judgment of Moraliſts, both Heathen and Chriſtian. Eternal Miſery is a neceſſary Conſequence in Souls thus habituated, without God's Interpoſition: So far, therefore, as the Soul is concern'd, we can't reflect upon God; unleſs it can be prov'd, that he's under ſome Obligation to offer Violence to Nature, either by an arbitrary, irreſiſtible Reformation of ſuch wicked Souls, or elſe by an abrupt Annihilation. Mens Eyes are eaſily dazzled with God's Goodneſs; but when his Attributes are judiciouſly conſider'd, and (as they ſhould always be) in Concert and perfect Union; there may appear abundant Reaſon to juſtify God's ſuf-

fering ſuch Spirits to be miſerable for ever, as that Miſery is their Choice, and they are naturally immortal. It can't be doubted, but God may, if he pleaſes, annihilate any Part of the Creation; but he certainly can't be obliged to do it. And as ſuch Spirits are in themſelves indiſpos'd for Heaven, the Poſſibility of making them happy by Reformation, may very juſtly be queſtion'd: For, if it be done at all, it muſt, probably, be done by diſpoſing them to a free Approbation of Virtue; and, after the Means that have been already us'd in vain, what Hopes are there of this? And, without Reformation, the Caſe is more deſperate: If they can't be perſuaded to be virtuous, who will expect, that God ſhould be acceſſary to their vicious Satisfactions? To be made virtuous by Force, is a glaring Contradiction to the Nature of Virtue, and the Nature of Man; and to be acceſſary to their vicious Satisfactions, is a plainer Contradiction to God's. So far, therefore, nothing can be imputed to God, but his permitting their Continuance in Being, *i. e.* not contradicting himſelf, and confounding the Laws of his Creation.

With reſpect to the Body, there is, indeed, ſome Poſitive Vengeance. As the Nature of Things, and God's Authority, are always to be conſider'd as exactly con-

current;

current; ſo he has appointed ſomething poſitive in both States of Immortality, to ſupport and vindicate that Authority, and the Righteouſneſs from whence it proceeds. As his Authority, in this Life, joins Virtue, and ſuch Things as lead to it; ſo the Glories and Advantages of Heaven, will increaſe its Happineſs in the other. As that Authority prohibits and diſcourages Vice, and all Things that may probably betray us into it; ſo the Torments and Diſadvantages of Hell will increaſe its Miſery. Virtuous Men would naturally be happy, and Vicious Men miſerable, tho' fix'd in no ſuch particular Reſidence as might contribute to it: But Heaven and Hell are the viſible, external Declarations of God's Righteouſneſs, as evident Appendages to Virtue and Vice.

And from whence ariſes that Extream Severity, that is charg'd as irreconcilable with God's Goodneſs and Juſtice, ſuppoſing this State of Things Eternal? Let us reflect on the Original State of the Body, as we did before on that of the Soul. God created Man with a Body as well as a Soul; not intrinſically immortal as the Soul was, but, however, deſign'd (by proper Supports and Alterations) to keep it Company for ever. The Tranſgreſſion of God's Poſitive Command in Paradiſe, forfeited this indulgent Care of it, and ſubjected it

to Infirmities and Diſeaſes, without any effectual Remedy, any that could prevent its Diſſolution; and the Conſequence of this Diſſolution was to have been irrecoverable Diſperſion. This was abſolutely bought off by their Redeemer: He prevented the Conſequences of the Sentence paſs'd on *Adam*, with reſpect to a Future State; he was inveſted with Power to raiſe all Human Bodies from the Grave, to reunite them to their Spirits, and then diſpoſe all Men according to their Conduct and Temper.

The Reſtoration of the Body muſt, in general, be allow'd to be a Favour; and what Favour may not be abus'd? What Bleſſing may not be perverſly turn'd into a Curſe? And by what Rule can Omnipotence be bound to watch the Perverſeneſs of Mankind, and alter the Nature of Things, as often as they act irregularly, leſt they ſhould ſuffer by it? Such was the Order of the Human Part of the Creation, the Body and Soul were to be eternally united; a ſuitable Proviſion was made for their Happineſs in this Earthly State, and a proper Refinement would have diſpos'd 'em for the Celeſtial. The Ruin of all this was repair'd by Chriſt; but not ſo, as to make it incapable of future Ruin; and if that follow'd, *there remain'd no more Sacrifice for Sin.* All Souls were naturally immortal, and all Bodies were reinſtated in their Relation to them;

them; and the Conſequence, a being either happy or miſerable, depended on this Life. To ſecure, if poſſible, the Happineſs deſign'd 'em, all proper Applications were made from Heaven: If among theſe ſome Terrors were mix'd, and particularly ſome Corporal Puniſhments; this muſt be confeſs'd a probable Method to perſuade Men, not incorrigible; and, after ſo much Indulgence, no unjuſt Severity. Since all Parts of the Creation correſpond regularly, it might reaſonably be expected, that as the happy Part of Mankind will not be happy without their Bodies, ſo they, who have made themſelves miſerable, will not be miſerable without them. And as ſome Poſitive Puniſhment is equitable, after the Abuſe of ſo much Goodneſs, ſo a Body ſeems to be the proper Subject for it. The Soul, being a Free Agent, ſeems capable of no other Puniſhment but Privation of Bliſs, and the ſeveral Means to it: All its Miſery, that does not ariſe from its Body, ſeems naturally to ariſe from its own Reflections; and tho' theſe may make it moſt grievouſly miſerable, yet, ſuppoſing it without any Body, 'tis hard to conceive ſuch Reflections externally forc'd upon it. But ſhould this External Force upon an unbody'd Spirit be ſuppos'd; yet ſuch Affections, according to our preſent Apprehenſions, would not be obſervable by others; and if not, they

they would not anſwer the End of ſuch Puniſhment, and therefore cannot be made the Matter of Poſitive Vengeance. And probably, for this Reaſon; In the Fall of Man, the Poſitive Puniſhment was laid on the Body; and if ſo, a Body muſt be ſuppos'd.

But it may be reaſonable to ſuppoſe in general, that no created Spirits exiſt without ſomething anſwering to Bodies. Something of this kind ſeems imply'd of the Devil and his Angels, who were created of a Superior Order; for, to us, 'tis hardly conceivable, how Flames could otherwiſe be prepar'd for them. And our Saviour declares, that the Sons of the Reſurrection are, with reſpect to their Bodies, like the Angels. This muſt ſeem a ſtrange Compariſon, if Angels have no Sort of Bodies. And if we may ſuppoſe ſomething Corporeal neceſſary, then, tho' theſe Bodies had been loſt in the Grave, upon the Fall of Man, yet, if God (as Governor of the World) had inflicted any Puniſhment for the Wickedneſs conſequent upon it, 'tis highly probable, the Material Part would have been immediately affected by it, and the Soul thro' that: How, we can't explain, even while we feel it. And if the Soul brings it ſelf into a Vicious, Reprobate State notwithſtanding its Redemption; why ſhould it ſeem incredible or ſhocking,

Matt. 25. 41.

Luk. 20. 36.

ing, that it ſhould feel God's Reſentments in this Body? Is not this a proper Exhibition of God's Juſtice and Purity? A Diſpenſation, that may have much greater Uſes in the Rational World, than we can at preſent conceive. But we know at preſent, 'tis entirely agreeable to the Univerſal Scheme of God, to make ſenſible Repreſentations to his Creatures. How much ſuch Corporal Puniſhments will make ſuch Spirits more miſerable than they might have made themſelves, can't certainly be ſaid: 'Tis certain, 'tis the Soul only that ſuffers in all Caſes; and many Afflictions of the Mind are now worſe than bodily Diſtempers: But how much ſoever may (by this Method) be added to their Miſeries, a little Reflection upon the True State of their Caſe, may ſilence all Murmurs.

God created Human Spirits immortal; whether they ſhould be happy or miſerable, depended on their Conduct. This Conduct was ſuch as made them miſerable. God propoſes their Recovery; publiſhes the Conditions and Means of it. They who embrace theſe Conditions, they who uſe theſe Means, are aſſur'd of Happineſs; and they who do not, are left in their former Miſery; only with this Addition, That whereas their Body was to be deſtroy'd by Death, this New Method preſerves it. Being ſo preſerv'd, it muſt follow the Condition of the

the Soul, and they muſt mutually affect each other. There is, therefore, in this, nothing that's Peculiar to Chriſtianity, but ſuch External Puniſhments as may be underſtood to be inflicted on the Body. The Spirits of the Wicked would have been eternally miſerable, tho' Chriſt had never been Incarnate; *the Wrath of God abides on them:* They are as they were before, only more miſerable, as their Sins are aggravated.

As a ſerious and good Man can't but praiſe God for the Glories of Heaven; ſo 'tis not only in vain, but unreaſonable, for the moſt preſumptuous, (deſirous to be wicked at as cheap a Rate as poſſible) to murmur, and reproach him for the Torments of Hell. All have an unconfin'd Choice given them; all have *Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing,* plainly *ſet before them.* If ſome could wiſh to be excus'd this Choice, contented with their Portion in this Life, and willing to have no Share in the other, but to return to Nothing, out of which they were taken; 'tis an extravagant Folly, to think of altering the Natures of Things, of over-ruling the Laws and Order, eſtabliſh'd by God in the Creation.

To conclude this Point. As God cannot appear, upon any Natural Principle, oblig'd to annihilate any of his Creatures; ſo

ſo he has not given us any Reaſon to expect he will, in any Part of his Revelations: And ſhould it be declar'd by Divine Authority, that the Puniſhment, or the Miſeries of the Wicked, ſhould not be Eternal, upon any other Foot but Annihilation, all Chriſtians would be oblig'd to believe it; but it would, at the ſame Time, entirely confound all reaſoning Men, in all other Points of Religion. For, ſome Account of them muſt be found out, independent both of the Nature of God, and the Nature of Virtue. For, as I have before obſerv'd, there could be no Hopes of Reformation; they that were Vicious, would be Vicious ſtill. And, to our preſent Apprehenſion, there appears a Natural and Neceſſary Relation between Virtue and Happineſs, Vice and Miſery: And upon this Foundation, 'tis eaſy to account for all God's Religious Diſpenſations, but not without it.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Concerning the Satisfaction of Chriſt.

IN judging of this Part of God's Diſpenſations, which is Perſonally accompliſh'd by the Son; 'tis, in the firſt Place, neceſſary, that we ſhould conceive Rightly of God himſelf. In order to this, we muſt exclude all Paſſions, and all Perſonal Intereſt out of our Thoughts: This, as well as all other Parts of his Diſpenſations, is entirely for the Sake of his Creatures. But Creatures being once ſuppos'd, the Relation ariſing from them immediately occaſions his exerting his Attributes, according to their Conduct. The Effects of his Attributes, thus exerted, to make them more intelligible, are expreſs'd (to our Apprehenſions) in our own way. His Neceſſary Diſlike of Vice, is call'd his Wrath; and the Effects of it, Puniſhments. His Rational Approbation of Virtue, is call'd Love; and the Effects of it, are ſtil'd Rewards.

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He is himſelf to be conſider'd as the Governor of a Rational World, conſiſting of ſeveral Species, or ſeveral Orders of Rational Creatures. He muſt be underſtood to act according to the Dignity of this Character, and according to the Perfections of his own Nature. This Queſtion, therefore, may ariſe: Suppoſing ſome One Species univerſally Vicious, What muſt be done? Muſt they be ſuffer'd to go on, without any Reſtraint or Puniſhment? What would the reſt of the Creation think of this?

Muſt they be deſtroy'd, to prevent it? This is, indeed, what we might (upon firſt Thoughts) expect. But, could any Expedient be found out, agreeable to the Honour and Righteouſneſs of Such a Sovereign; which might make that Part of the Creation proper Subjects of Mercy, and, by making them ſo, ſecure the End of their Creation? Such an Expedient ſhould be univerſally receiv'd with Hallelujahs of Joy and Gratitude. And ſuch an Expedient is propos'd and accompliſh'd in the Chriſtian Diſpenſation. But this Joy and Gratitude is not ſo Univerſal as it ſhould be; it has never been free from malignant Prejudices. The Fallen Angels might have been ſuppos'd the only Enemies of the Croſs of Chriſt, had not Experience convinc'd us it has too many others. Probably, the ſhorteſt way to judge rightly of all more Modern

dern Oppoſitions, may be, to reflect on the Temper and Conduct of its Original Adverſaries. St. *Paul's* Account of this Matter, gives us a clear Light into it: Theſe
1 Cor. 1. Adverſaries were both *Jews* and *Greeks*; and he declares the Principles upon which they both proceeded.

The *Jews* importunately requir'd a Sign; tho' the whole Life of our Bleſſed Saviour, from his Incarnation to his Settlement in Heaven, was One Continu'd Miracle. The *Greeks* blindly ſought after Wiſdom; tho' this Diſpenſation of God's, in the Redemption of Mankind, is the moſt Illuſtrious Syſtem of it that ever he was pleas'd to diſcover.

The *Jews* were at that Time a contemptible and oppreſs'd People; but their Minds were ſtrictly engag'd with Pride, with Vengeance, and with Ambition: They were ill diſpos'd to receive ſuch a Meſſiah; a Meſſiah, that had *no Beauty* to tempt one to *deſire him*; a Meſſiah, *that was* himſelf *deſpis'd and rejected of Men.* They had perſuaded themſelves into extravagant Expectations; Expectations of one that ſhould appear, with all the Advantages of worldly Pomp, and of Human Power. They were eaſy under the Bondage of Sin and Death, and all their Conſequences; they were ſollicitous only to get rid of their Temporal Enemies: And, to find themſelves diſappointed

pointed of ſo fair a Proſpect, all they had propos'd with ſo much Pride and Pleaſure; to ſee their Meſſiah pretend to nothing but a Spiritual Kingdom; and not only ſo, but pull down the Partition-Wall, and let in the *Gentile* World; theſe Things poſſeſs'd them with as much Prejudice againſt the Truth, as Pride and Ambition, as Bigotry, Shame, and Indignation could ſuggeſt.

The *Greeks* were puff'd up with Knowledge: They look'd upon Faith as a Diſgrace to 'em: Becauſe the Doctrines which the Apoſtles preach'd, were not ſubmitted to their Rules of Reaſoning and Philoſophy, and explain'd by them, they boldly condemn'd them for Fooliſhneſs, as fit only for the implicit Faith of illiterate Bigots. Their Prejudice ſeems not powerful againſt the Moral Precepts of the Goſpel. 'Tis obſerv'd, they who did not receive the Articles of Faith, made uſe of theſe, for the Improvement of their own Doctrines in Morality. They were diſguſted at the Myſteries the Apoſtles deliver'd, becauſe they deliver'd them with no other Demonſtration than that of the Spirit, and of Power. They could not underſtand, how the Word could be made Fleſh, and dwell among them: They, probably, look'd upon it, as one of the Vulgar Fables of their own Incarnate gods; which one among our ſelves, and (I thank God) but one, has been bold

enough to insinuate. They could not apprehend, how one who dy'd as a common Malefactor, should (by his Death) be a Full, a Perfect, a Sufficient Sacrifice for a World! How he should then, by his own Power, recover his Body from the Grave, and triumph over Death! Had these Doctrines been adorn'd with Curious Philosophical Speculations, they might possibly, for some Time, have engag'd their Thoughts; but finding themselves, after all, not able to comprehend them, they must either have chang'd their Temper, or else have continued Infidels.

From these Instances, we may see the Necessity of a sober Disposition: For want of this, those Things that are not only in themselves credible, but attended too with the greatest Evidence their Nature will bear, may be obstinately rejected. Many, who do not chuse to dispute the Authority of Christ and his Apostles, find out some Evasions (how laborious soever) to secure themselves against the Force of plain Expressions. The First Chapter of St. *John*'s Gospel is a signal Instance of Industry and Resolution in this way; in reversing and unrevealing the Mysteries of Christianity; casting a thicker Veil over them than that which Christ took away; and all this, only because they are not more than Men, because they are Rational, and not Omniscient.

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This Power of a malignant Corruption of the Mind, and (in Conſequence of that) a riotous Reaſoning, has appear'd too evidently, not only in the Influence it has had on Articles of Faith, but on the plaineſt Moral Duties. 'Tis evident, from the Practice of many, and from the Profeſſion of ſome, that Men can reconcile to themſelves the groſſeſt Immoralities, the greateſt Outrages of Luſt and Malice. They who do not preſume to patronize them in general, will however, (in thoſe Caſes, in which they are themſelves concern'd) find out ſomething to ſatisfy them, or at leaſt to ſilence their Conſciences. Circumſtances may be craftily plac'd in a falſe Light, and confus'd Arguments may be drawn from the Reaſons and the Ends of Laws; and any Shifts muſt be made, rather than renounce what they have ſo much at Heart. But this I mention, only to ſhew more plainly the Force of ſuch a Temper; and conſequently, the little Reaſon any Man has to ſuffer ſuch Adverſaries to weaken the full Aſſurance of his Faith. And if their Numbers don't affect him, I can ſee no Reaſon to apprehend their Arguments will. A ſtrange Sort of Grammatical Chymiſtry has diſſolv'd the Scriptures from the ſeveral important Truths, into which they were compos'd by the Sacred Authors, and left them uſeleſs Elements. What Reverence that Fraternity can

themſelves maintain for 'em in their Hearts, I will not preſume to ſay; but, to me, it would be as hard a Task to vindicate their Honour upon ſuch Principles, as to explain the moſt abſtruſe Myſtery in them.

Some, perhaps, have inſiſted too much upon refin'd Notions, and thereby made Middling Capacities an eaſier Prey to thoſe Great Profeſſors of Reaſon and Explication. The Adequacy, or Equivalency of the Sufferings of a Redeemer, without fixing upon the Perſon, is a curious Method of conſidering this Part of God's Diſpenſations; which they, who chuſe it, may ſee largely enough treated by many Hands; but the Generality of Chriſtians cannot apply to ſuch Speculations, or, at leaſt, cannot apprehend them. And ſince we have ſo good Evidence of the Proper Divinity of our Saviour, we cannot doubt but he was Equal to this Work.

Running a Parallel likewiſe between God's Oeconomy herein, and the Common Courſe of Civil Juſtice among Men, may be an agreeable Entertainment; but 'tis only a continued Scheme of Similitudes; and that's a Method, wherein the Writer frequently impoſes on the Reader; and the Reader as often eſcapes from the true Reaſonings of the Writer.

It may poſſibly be ſome Eaſe to thoſe Minds, that can't find their Satisfaction in

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that way, to obſerve, that thoſe Authors who aſſert this Adequacy, fix it in the Chriſtian Covenant. They do not confine God's Conduct to this particular Method; but they firſt ſuppoſe God to have order'd this Matter ſo, To have reſolv'd on a ſtrict Equivalent. The Neceſſity of ſuch, therefore, they ſuppoſe to ariſe, not from the Nature of the Thing, but from God's Appointment and Decree. Did it ariſe from the Nature of the Thing, they could not ſuppoſe any other Method of Redemption poſſible; becauſe none but a Perſon truly Infinite, *i. e.* truly God, could (according to their Scheme) be effectually ſubſtituted; a Finite Perſon not anſwering the Infinite Demerits of Mankind. There could, therefore, be no other Method; for to ſuppoſe the Third Perſon in the ſame Divinity ſubſtituted by the Father, would hardly be another Method. When ſuch Authors, therefore, declare other Methods poſſible, they muſt be underſtood to declare in the ſame Sentence, that ſuch Natural Adæquacy was not originally and abſtractedly neceſſary: And if ſo, all Chriſtians need not be entangled with ſuch Difficulties. They who will make uſe of their Bibles and their Reaſon, may ſufficiently inform themſelves in this Matter, without any Aſſiſtances either from Metaphyſicks, or from Law.

When the Incarnation of our Bleſſed Saviour was proclaim'd, a Glorious Company of Angels immediately join'd in praiſing and glorifying God, and in pronouncing Bleſſings on Mankind: And 'twas of Importance enough to deſerve ſuch Solemnity. This Saviour himſelf was *Chriſt the Lord*; and the Joy he brought, was to *all People*: And 'tis no ſmall Comfort to all, that He is call'd *The Lord*. The ſame Original Word that expreſſes this Character [Κύριος], is conſtantly given Chriſt throughout the New Teſtament; and that Word is as conſtantly us'd throughout the Old, as tranſlated by *Jews*, to expreſs *Jehovah*, the Incommunicable Name of God; which they were moſt religiouſly cautious not to apply to any, but the One Supreme God. If, therefore, the New Teſtament (which was written by *Jews*, and chiefly for the Uſe of their Brethren) applies to Chriſt that Name by which they, throughout the Old, expreſs in their own Tranſlation (which was then much us'd) *the True God*; what could they, who receiv'd the New Teſtament, conclude from hence, but that Chriſt was indeed God? Had he not been ſo, how could thoſe Writers be juſtify'd, in leading their Converts into ſuch a Snare?

They muſt be confirm'd in this, by what they find attributed to him. The Character

of a Prophet, may not imply any Thing more than Human Nature aſſiſted by Inſpiration: That of a Prieſt, attoning for Mankind univerſally, by the Sacrifice of himſelf, would (from the Importance of the Thing, how diſputable ſoever) naturally lead us to ſuppoſe more. But the Conduct of his Royal Character, a Government of ſuch a Nature, Univerſal and Spiritual, over-ruling and judging both Men and Angels; this appears naturally to require Divine Attributes. To inſpect and influence the Univerſe; to obſerve not only the Actions of all Mankind, but the moſt reſerv'd Principles and Intentions from which they proceed; to recollect all theſe, and aſſign them their exact Rewards and Puniſhments; theſe are ſuch great Things, they might well be ready to receive him as *the Lord*, in the moſt eminent Senſe.

Thus far I have choſen to inſiſt here on this Point, becauſe the Divinity of our Redeemer is of great Weight in this Diſpenſation: Without being critically nice, 'tis eaſy to ſee its Importance to the Ends which God propos'd. The Scriptures will juſtify us, in giving theſe Two Reaſons for God's inſiſting on the Sufferings of Chriſt. Firſt, in General, To demonſtrate his own Righteouſneſs, not only to us, but to the whole Rational Creation; both as conſider'd abſolutely in himſelf, and relatively as the Go-

vernor of the World. Secondly, By this Means particularly, to promote a Concern for Virtue among Men; ſuch as ſhould put them upon qualifying themſelves for the Mercy purchas'd for them, and command ſolemn Apprehenſions of God's Severity againſt Sin; inſiſting on ſuch Afflictions in ſuch a Character, as a competent Expreſſion of it.

Whatever might be urg'd in Behalf of an Inferior Character, 'tis, however, an ineſtimable Comfort to us, that ſuppoſing this Dignity in our Redeemer, the Fulneſs, the Perfection, the Sufficiency of his Sacrifice and Satisfaction, is plac'd beyond Diſpute.

It is, indeed, too much diſputed, whether there was in Fact any Satisfaction propos'd? And ſurprizing Turns are given to the whole Stile of the New Teſtament, to avoid the moſt Comfortable Doctrine that ever reach'd Human Ears.

It may well be wonder'd, what ſhould put Men upon ſuch Extraordinary Meaſures, ſuch Unnatural Diſtortions of ſuch Important Things!

The Pretence is Pompous enough: The Common Notion of Chriſt's Satisfaction is, they ſay, Inconſiſtent with God's Attributes.

The Attributes appeal'd to, are, his Juſtice, and his Goodneſs. As to his Juſtice, the Queſtion muſt be, Whether it be conſiſtent

ſtent with it, to excuſe Criminals themſelves, and inflict their Puniſhment on ſome other Innocent Perſon? That the Goodneſs of God might have abſolv'd Sinners without any Puniſhment, this has been frequently aſſerted; but that 'tis in general inconſiſtent with his Juſtice to inflict any Puniſhment, this, I think, has never yet been pretended.

That an innocent Perſon, when he has taken on himſelf the Deſerts and penal Effects of the Actions of another, may juſtly ſuffer 'em; this is confirm'd by the unanimous Conſent, and by the conſtant Practice of all Nations. This apears daily in pecuniary Puniſhments, in Fines and Forfeitures. And that there's the ſame Reaſon for it in Corporal, ſeems evident from hence, That pecuniary Puniſhments, all Fines and Forfeitures, are no otherwiſe Puniſhments, than as they do at laſt reſolve themſelves into Corporal, as they either reduce the Perſon in his Pleaſures, or ſubject him to real Hardſhips and Inconveniencies, or have at length theſe Effects upon his Dependants and Heirs; and this would be ſtill more unjuſt, as they are ſtill more diſtant from the Perſon to whom the Puniſhment was originally due, and are not ſuppos'd to have conſented to it. But that the ſevereſt corporal Puniſhments, even to Death it ſelf, may as

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juſtly be inflicted in ſuch voluntary Caſes, is declar'd the Judgment of all Nations in their Treatment of Hoſtages, Perſons deliver'd as Pledges for the Fidelity of others: And the Juſtice of ſuch vicarious Puniſhments is plain from Reaſon. That all the Ends of Puniſhments may be effectually ſecur'd by 'em, this is acknowledg'd on all Hands. If therefore there be Injuſtice done, it muſt be to the Sufferer, or ſome other on whom he depends. Where the Sufferer is independent, entirely at his own Diſpoſal, there can be no Injury done to the Right, no Violence to the Authority of another; what's ſuffer'd by his being expos'd to ſuch Puniſhments terminates in himſelf; if there be any Injuſtice done, it muſt be to him. But in this Caſe, all Pretence of Injuſtice to the Sufferer is excluded by his free Conſent; by his preferring that generous Act to his own Eaſe and Life.

Neither is there any thing in the Chriſtian Faith concerning the Satisfaction of Chriſt, that's any way prejudicial to God's Goodneſs. Goodneſs in God, conſider'd as an Attribute, is an Inclination to promote the Happineſs of his Creatures; and this being perfect, not finite and partial, as Goodneſs among Men, it muſt incline to do this Good in the moſt perfect and univerſal manner. Among Rational Creatures, laſting Happineſs (which alone deſerves the Name)

Name) cannot be ſeparated from Virtue: This is the neceſſary Means to That, and That the inſeparable End of This. God's Goodneſs therefore muſt proſecute the Reformation of Mankind, in whatever Meaſures he ſhows 'em Mercy. Now, whether a ſurprizing Pardon, granted without Concern for their paſt Viciouſneſs, or their future Virtuouſneſs, be likely to have ſuch Influence, likely to make 'em virtuous, and conſequently happy; this, I believe, may be referr'd to the Votes of Men themſelves.

And ſhould we ſuppoſe it poſſible for God, by ſome extraordinary Meaſures, to make Men happy for the preſent, notwithſtanding their Viciouſneſs; how muſt this affect the reſt of the Creation, and probably, in a ſhort time, Men themſelves? But if the reſt of the Creation, for which he muſt be concern'd as Univerſal Governor, are led hereby into a careleſs Conduct, either more extraordinary Meaſures muſt be concerted to prevent it, or elſe his Treatment of Mankind would not be Goodneſs; becauſe, upon the whole, it would not be promoting Happineſs among his Creatures: And a Succeſſion of extraordinary Meaſures is no Honour to any Government, but ſuch a Blemiſh, as is never to be ſuppos'd in the Divine.

On the other hand; To ſpare an infected Limb to the Danger of the whole Body, may

may be Tenderneſs, but not Goodneſs; and conſequently to cut it off to prevent that Danger, ſhows no want of Goodneſs. Men may chuſe preſent and partial Good, but the Wiſe Governor of the World proceeds in a more perfect, comprehenſive manner. Again, Particular Inſtances of God's Goodneſs conſiſts in ſuch Methods of promoting the Happineſs of particular Creatures, as he was not in ſtrict Juſtice oblig'd to: But then his abſtracted Goodneſs requires they ſhould be ſuch as are conſiſtent with the Good of the Whole.

We are too apt to amuſe our ſelves with pleaſing Contemplations on God's Goodneſs and Mercy, and overlook the reſt of his Attributes, and our own Unworthineſs. But we diſhonour God; we impute to him the Infirmities of Humanity, when we extend the Effects of one Attribute beyond the Limits of another. They are all Infinite, *i. e.* there is not a Poſſibility of any proper Object of Juſtice, of Wiſdom, of Goodneſs, or of Power, which the Juſtice, the Wiſdom, the Goodneſs, or the Power of God don't reach. But yet, as we muſt ſpeak, they are all mutual Bounds to each other; they continually obſerve a perfect Agreement and Harmony among themſelves: And as to attribute any Effects to his Wiſdom, that are not conſiſtent with Juſtice and Goodneſs, wou'd be to reproach him with

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Craſt and Subtilty; ſo to attribute any thing to his Goodneſs, that is not conſiſtent with his Juſtice and Wiſdom, is to reproach him with Weakneſs. 'Tis therefore no Reflection on God's Goodneſs, that he did not pardon the Human World without inſiſting on Satisfaction to his Juſtice, and effectually manifeſting his Averſion to Unrighteouſneſs, and thereby conſulting the Happineſs of the Whole. His Goodneſs and Mercy inclin'd to ſave Mankind from Deſtruction; but his eſſential Righteouſneſs, and Juſtice, and Majeſty, forbid that ſo much Wickedneſs ſhould triumph in Impunity.

Such Objections from God's Goodneſs, againſt Chriſt's ſuffering for the Sins of Mankind, are equally valid againſt all the Puniſhments that God has ever inflicted in this World, or ever can in this or the next. And as the Severities which Chriſt ſuffer'd, are no Objection againſt God's Goodneſs in general; ſo neither are they againſt the Freedom of his Grace in Man's Redemption. He might very juſtly have inſiſted on our ſuffering the Puniſhments due to our Sins in our own Perſons, without any Relaxation: But he was mercifully pleas'd to ſend his Son to be a Propitiation for 'em. Had we perſonally ſatisfy'd his Juſtice, as we might have been oblig'd to do, we could probably never have recovered any Degrees of Happineſs; we muſt probably have ſunk under it,

it, and been loſt for ever; as all now muſt, who have no Title to Chriſt. Were there any thing in this Doctrine inconſiſtent with God's Attributes, then, how plain ſoever the Words of Scripture might ſeem, we muſt conclude it was not their true Meaning; but ſince there is not, let us now compare the Repreſentations which the Scriptures give us of the Death of Chriſt, with thoſe that are oppos'd to 'em.

1. The Scriptures deſcribe the Death of Chriſt, as efficaciouſly averting the Wrath
Iſa. 9. of God from Mankind. *Iſaiah* ſays, *The chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are heal'd: his ſoul was to be made an offering for ſin: he bare the*
Iſa. 53. *ſin of many: he made interceſſion for tranſgreſſors.* But that whole Chapter is a Preface to the Goſpel, and a Deſcription of Chriſt in his Extremities.

Rom. 5. St. *Paul* repreſents it thus: *When we were without ſtrength*, i. e. incapable of recovering our ſelves, *Chriſt dy'd for the ungodly in due time.* We may therefore depend on it, *being now juſtify'd by his blood, we ſhall be ſaved from wrath thro' him. As by one man's diſobedience many were made ſinners; ſo by the obedience of one ſhall many be made righteous*; that is, accepted of God. He repeats the ſame Doctrine in the fifth
2 Cor. 5. 18. Chapter of his ſecond to *Corinth*, and calls

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it, *our being reconciled to God:* And in another Epiſtle he ſays, *Chriſt deliver'd us from the wrath to come.* 1 Theſſ. 1. 10.

They who oppoſe this Doctrine, deſcribe Chriſt's Death only as a Teſtimony, That his Doctrine of Pardon upon Repentance was true.

Upon this Foot, *John the Baptiſt* had the better Title; his urging this Doctrine of Repentance upon *Herod*, was the immediate Cauſe of his Death: Had he choſe to have been ſilent at firſt, or to have ſoften'd his Doctrine afterwards, he might have ſav'd his Head. But 'tis notorious, that the Death of Chriſt had a very different Occaſion; and though *John* was certainly well acquainted with the Doctrine of Repentance, and though Chriſt pronounces him more than a Prophet, yet he adds, *he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.* The Kingdom here is evidently the Goſpel Diſpenſation; and if the great Buſineſs of this was Pardon upon Repentance, wherein could the greateſt Apoſtle be greater than *John the Baptiſt?* But if the Purchaſe of this Pardon by the Blood of Chriſt, if the Reconciliation of God to Mankind by his Death, if the great Myſtery of Redemption was then to be explain'd, they who were bleſs'd with ſuch Revelations were eminently greater.

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Mark 1. 4. Whoever preaches Repentance muſt preach Pardon too at the ſame time, or elſe 'tis certain he muſt preach to no purpoſe. This therefore was the profeſs'd Character of *John*; and his Baptiſm is from hence call'd the Baptiſm of Repentance. But after the Death of Chriſt, all things proceeded upon higher Principles: God's Righteouſneſs and Majeſty were then publickly vindicated; and 'twas conſiſtent with both, to ſhow more Favour to Mankind.

But Chriſt's aſſerting his Dignity, his being the Meſſiah, his being the Son of God, his being God; theſe were the Motives upon which the *Jews* perſecuted him to the Croſs: And becauſe theſe would have no Force with a *Roman* Magiſtrate, they urg'd the Ambiguity of his claiming a Kingdom; and he did not ſo much as mention this Doctrine of Pardon upon Repentance either at his Tryal, or on the Croſs. The Confirmation therefore of this cou'dn't be the End of his Death. To whom ſhould it ſerve as Evidence? Or who diſputed it? Had the *Jews* urg'd him to recant ſuch Doctrine, it would have been a ſtrange ſullen Perverſeneſs in 'em; but however, had they urg'd him, and he perſiſted, it might have given ſome Colour to this Imagination. Tho',

2. The deepeſt Colour, one would think, ſhould be taken off by thoſe Repreſentations

ons in Scripture, which inſiſt on the Price paid for our Redemption.

We are declar'd by St. *Paul to be bought with a price, both our bodies and our ſouls.* And 'tis plain we were bought by Chriſt, becauſe our being bought is urg'd as a Reaſon why we ſhould be his Servants. We are expreſsly told, *The Son of Man came to give his life a ranſom for many*, λύτρον, the Price of Redemption. Again, *He gave himſelf a ranſom for all, to be teſtify'd in due time*, ἀντίλυτρον. When we conſider to whom theſe Things were writ, and the plain Reference they have to the ranſoming Things from Death under the Law, by the Death of ſome other Thing accepted inſtead of it; and again, the common Cuſtom of redeeming Captives, and purchaſing Slaves; and find the Life of Chriſt ſo often call'd the Price of our Redemption, or the Ranſom of our Souls; in this Caſe, 'tis very hard to underſtand any thing, but his dying for us in the ſtricteſt Senſe.

1 Cor. 6. 20. Chap. 7. 13. Matt. 20. 28. 1 Tim. 2. 6.

But hard as it is, this too muſt, they ſay, be ſo interpreted, as not to imply any Satisfaction to the Majeſty of Heaven, any Expiation for our Souls. Nothing more is allow'd to be deſign'd by all this, but only, That Chriſt by dying obtain'd of God a Power of forgiving Sins in ſome Senſe. But neither muſt this be conceived any thing more than a temporal Privilege; a Power

of curing Diſeaſes inflicted for Sin; which he did perſonally when on Earth, and deputed the ſame Power to his Apoſtles after his Aſcenſion.

His being a Ranſom for All, according to this, ſignifies only his ſubmitting to Death, to procure a Licenſe to heal a few ſick Perſons, or reſtore Sight to the Blind; though that is expreſsly ſaid not to be occaſion'd by Sin: Tho' it is expreſsly ſaid likewiſe, That this Power, as exercis'd both by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, was only for miraculous Evidence; and as ſuch referr'd to the general End, the Eſtabliſhment of the Veracity of the Doctrine and Character he aſſerted. He was glad of the Occaſion of raiſing *Lazarus* from the Dead, that they might believe; and the Signs that he empower'd his Diſciples, and particularly his Apoſtles, to exhibit, were to confirm the Word. His Death muſt, however, be ſuppos'd the Price of nothing but this Power; a Power in it ſelf neceſſary to propagate or ſupport the Faith, and therefore reaſonably to be expected without ſo dear a Price. Both the Bodies and Spirits of all Mankind are here ſuppos'd bought with this Price. only becauſe a few Impotent, Blind, Dead Men were reſtor'd to their Limbs, their Eyes, their Life, within the Compaſs of a ſmall Spot of Ground, and the Courſe of a few Years; in which all other Nations and

John 11. 14.

Mark 16. 20.

Ages have no Intereſt, but what deſtroys this Suppoſition, and confirms to 'em their Dependance on much greater Things, the true Effects of his Death.

3. The Scripture likewiſe plainly repreſents Chriſt, as Suffering in our Stead.

St. *Paul* declares, that *Chriſt taſted of Death for every Man, i. e.* in the Place of all, to prevent their Periſhing by it. Again, he ſays, *He was once offer'd, to bear the Sins of many.* St. *Peter* tells us, *He once ſuffer'd for Sins, the juſt for the unjuſt.* Heb. 2. 9. 9. 28. 1 Pet. 3. 18.

From theſe expreſs Authorities, it might be ſuppos'd ſufficiently confirm'd, that Chriſt died to deliver us from Death; that his Sufferings were accepted on our Behalf, and prevented ours. But while we are imagining all the Comforts of being thus repreſented, and Chriſt's being made a Curſe for us; we are told, He died indeed for our Sakes, but 'twas only to ſet us an Example of Patience and Obedience. That he did ſet us ſuch an Example, and that his Death is urg'd in that View, is thankfully acknowledg'd: But this has a very different Foundation from what this Scheme gives it. The Dignity of his Perſon, and the Severity of his Afflictions, as endur'd for us, to deliver us from the Wrath of God; theſe give it all its Force. If the Son of God

Incarnate ſubmitted to ſuch Indignities, with the utmoſt Meekneſs and Reſignation; how ill does it become his Diſciples, to rage under trifling Injuries; or impatiently throw off the Yoke of much lighter Inconveniencies, impos'd on them for the Sake of his Religion? If he was *wounded for our Tranſgreſſions*, and *bruis'd for our Iniquities*; how abſurd is it for us, to be fond of thoſe Tranſgreſſions and Iniquities, and by that means defeat and fruſtrate all the Severities of his Life and Death? In this View, theſe Arguments are affectionate and powerful: But according to the *Socinian* Account, every Apoſtle that was martyr'd, became Equal to his Saviour: For they all preach'd the ſame Doctrines, and all confirm'd them by their Death. The ſame Arguments may, therefore, be drawn in common from them all: And this will ſufficiently prove it not to be the true Senſe of thoſe Scriptures, that urge ſo emphatically the Sufferings of Chriſt.

4. The Scriptures copiouſly inſiſt on the Death of Chriſt, as an Expiatory Sacrifice for our Sins.

The Baptiſt, upon the Sight of Chriſt, devoutly cries, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the Sins of the World!* The Reference to the Paſchal Lamb, and others ſacrific'd under the Law, is here plain

John 1. 29.

plain enough. And this Reference, together with expreſs Compariſons between the Legal Sacrifices and the Death of Chriſt, is ſo often inſiſted on in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, it might be ſufficient to make one General Appeal to that; but, for a preſent View, I ſhall produce ſome ſingle Texts.

St. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf thus: *Who needeth not daily, as thoſe High Prieſts, to offer up Sacrifice firſt for his own ſins, and then for the people; for this he did once, when he offer'd up himſelf.* Heb. 7. 27. *Every High-Prieſt is ordain'd to offer Gifts and Sacrifices; wherefore it is of neceſſity that this Man have ſomething alſo to offer.* 8. 3. *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he enter'd in once into the holy place, having obtain'd eternal Redemption for us:* 9. 12, Such Redemption, by the Sacrifice of himſelf, that we ſhould never want another Expiation, unleſs by ſuch Wickedneſs as would make us unworthy of it. *It was therefore neceſſary, that the patterns of things in the heavens ſhould be purify'd with theſe, but the heavenly things themſelves with better Sacrifices than theſe. For Chriſt,* &c. ---23. Again; *'Twas not neceſſary he ſhould offer himſelf often; but once in the end of the world hath he appear'd, to take away ſin by the Sacrifice of himſelf.* ---25. ---26. *Sacrifice and Offering thou would'ſt not,* [*i. e.* ſuch Sacri- 10. 5.

fice and Offering as the Law directed, thou did'ſt not think equal to this Expiation;] *but a Body haſt thou prepar'd me*; [My own Death thou haſt appointed for that Purpoſe:] *This Man, after he had offer'd one Sacrifice for ſin, for ever ſat down on the right hand of God. For, by one Offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are ſanctified.*

'Twill not be expected, I ſhould here repreſent the ſeveral Steps taken to eſcape ſuch plain Doctrine: To evade the Evidence of ſuch a Cloud of Witneſſes, to form any plauſible Anſwer in ſuch a Caſe, may be ſuppos'd ſo laborious a Work, that Room cannot be allow'd here even for the Model of it. The Concluſion which theſe reſolute Diſputants reſt in, is this: That the Death of Chriſt perſuades us to that, which, in its Conſequence, obtains our Pardon: It confirms his Doctrine of Remiſſion upon Repentance, and in Conſequence of that, Eternal Life. And our Aſſurance of this, diſpoſes us to Repentance; that Repentance obtains that Remiſſion, and that Remiſſion brings with it Eternal Life. Therefore Chriſt's Death obtains for us Eternal Life.

This Induction is the whole of the Matter, the whole Theology of theſe great Deſpiſers of Syſtems. Not to inſiſt here, that this

this comes to the ſame Thing with the firſt. Account of his Death; that 'twas a Confirmation of his Doctrine; and that the Apoſtles had the ſame Title to our Salvation, as has been before obſerv'd. How is it poſſible to retain a juſt Reverence for thoſe Writings, that expreſs ſo much, and mean ſo little; that lead us in Meanders and Mazes, and leave us almoſt where we ſet out; that ſeem to ſport themſelves in Enigmatical Repreſentations, and ſtrain both the Propriety of Words, and the Truth of Things, to make them more difficult?

Let us ſuppoſe any Number of Subjects in Rebellion againſt their Prince; let us ſuppoſe that Prince graciouſly offering a General Pardon upon their Submiſſion and Returning to their Allegiance: They ſubmit, return, are pardon'd: They are afterwards urg'd with mighty Obligations to ſome particular Perſon; they are aſſur'd he procur'd them that Favour; he reconcil'd them to their Prince; he paid an immenſe Ranſom for their Lives, and very much diſtreſs'd himſelf by it. This is frequently inſiſted on in the ſtrongeſt Terms; they are importun'd in repeated Letters, to expreſs their Gratitude for it: But when all this comes to be more ſtrictly examin'd, it will bear no more than what this Explication leaves behind it; That he was the Perſon ſent by their Prince, to acquaint them with

his gracious Intentions; and that he ſuffer'd many Hardſhips in his Journey. The Conſequences of this would not be urg'd.

Laſtly, After all the Pains that have been taken in this way, if this one Principle proves true, That Chriſt's Propitiation is Univerſal, that it comprehends all Generations from the Foundation of the World; this alone effectually deſtroys all their Scheme: For the whole is ſuppos'd to begin after the *Jewiſh* Law was ſuperannuated, as an External Diſpenſation; at beſt, only a Solemn Encouragement to Repentance, and good Moral Rules. If the Influence of Chriſt's Death appear (from Scripture) to affect the whole Race, it muſt contain a great deal more, no leſs than a Proper Expiation: For they who liv'd before the Incarnation, could not be influenc'd in this artificial way.

For the Truth of this Principle, I appeal to what has been formerly ſaid upon it; particularly from *Heb.* 9. 26, 27. The Argument of which Place proceeds thus: Chriſt's Offering himſelf once, was ſufficient; for if it were not, he muſt often have ſuffer'd ſince the Foundation of the World. But why ſo? For no other Reaſon but this, Becauſe he is ſuppos'd to attone for all preceding Generations: Without this Suppoſition, the Apoſtle's Reaſoning don't hold.

'Tis

'Tis this Suppoſition only that ſecures his Concluſion, the Pre-eminence of Chriſt's Attonement above that of the High-Prieſt's: Without this, the Effect of it might extend no farther than his, or at moſt be confin'd to the preſent Generation, as his was to the preſent Year. There could be no Occaſion for its being often repeated ſince the Foundation of the World, but the Neceſſity of former Generations being atton'd for by it. This Neceſſity being ſuppos'd, nothing could ſuperſede thoſe Repetitions, but the Eminent Influence of his Expiation, which made it ſufficient for all Mankind at once: But, alas! of what Uſe could he be to Men long ſince dead, upon this laborious, idle Scheme?

And now, I think, the Profeſſors of the Catholick Doctrine concerning Chriſt's Death, may appeal in their Turns to God's Nature, and particularly to his Wiſdom.

The probable Effect of Impunity, is a Diminution of that Reverence and Concern, that's neceſſary to preſerve Obedience to Laws: And ſince we are ſo apt, under the ſevereſt Indications of God's Vengeance upon Sin, to be ſupine and negligent, and ſometimes preſumptuouſly provoke him; we have little Reaſon to ſuppoſe we ſhould have been ſo ingenuous, as to have ſuppreſs'd all our irregular Inclinations, on the Account of his Goodneſs only,

ly. His Mercy would ſcarce have perſuaded us, if his Terror can't. Love is, indeed, by far the moſt generous Principle of Action; but Fear is, in the Generality of Mankind, far more powerful. It was therefore very neceſſary, that God ſhould ſignify his Severity againſt Sin in the moſt ſenſible and moſt affectionate manner: This, as far as we can ſee, could not have been done ſo effectually, as by the Suffering of Chriſt; except in our own Final Deſtruction.

But tho' ſuch a Final Deſtruction of Mankind had vindicated the Righteouſneſs of God to the reſt of the Rational Creation; yet it had, at the ſame Time, deſtroy'd the better End of Puniſhments, the Reformation of Offenders: This is moſt affectionately promoted by Chriſt's Sufferings.

For, as we may juſtly argue from that Love which God ſhew'd to Mankind, in offering up his Son, that he will with him alſo freely give us all Things; ſo we muſt conclude, from the Severity which he ſhew'd in the Sufferings of his Son, that he will ſeverely puniſh thoſe that obſtinately refuſe the Offers of his Grace. He therefore wiſely provided for the Reformation of this Part of the World, at the ſame Time that he puniſh'd their paſt Iniquities. And this Reformation was neceſſary to the Accompliſhment of what was propos'd, the Eternal Happi-

Happineſs of Men : To have pardon'd all former Defects, and left them to mire themſelves in the ſame baſe Practices again, had been to much leſs Purpoſe. But God's Omniſcience engages in no imperfect Schemes, tho' he may proceed gradually to the Accompliſhment of the whole.

This Doctrine of Chriſt's Satisfaction preſerves us from Deſpair, but don't encourage us to Preſumption. It informs us, to our Comfort, that thoſe Sins, which are the Iſſues of our Natural and Original Infirmities or Corruptions, are pardon'd in the Puniſhments of Chriſt ; and that a ſincere Repentance and Reformation ſhall, for his Sake, blot out more heinous Sins. But it likewiſe informs us, to our Terror, that God will not ſuffer Sinners, unreform'd, to go unpuniſh'd : And as his Juſtice gives us this terrible Caution againſt continuing in our Sins, his Goodneſs is an endearing Argument to lead us to Repentance.

On the contrary, that Account of Chriſt, which rejects the Merits and Satisfaction of his Sufferings, and allows no other Deſign or Effect to his Death, but the Confirmation of that Meſſage which it ſuppoſes him to come about ; the Voluntary Pardon of God, without any Satisfaction to his Juſtice and Majeſty ; this is of very dangerous Conſequence ; becauſe it makes the Pardon of Sin an arbitrary Grant, which God,

God, without any Conſideration, or any Reaſon, (but his own Incontrollable Will) gave to this World. This is a continual Temptation to Sin, and Encouragement to Preſumption.

If there be nothing in Sin ſo contrary to God's Nature or Invariable Rules of Government, but he may, and has pardon'd a whole World, without inflicting the leaſt Puniſhment for it; then Sin is not ſo frightful a Thing as Syſtems make it; it is not ſo odious in the Sight of God, as 'tis generally repreſented. And if he once pardon'd it without any Satisfaction, we know he is *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever*: We know *his Compaſſions fail not*; *his Arm is not ſhorten'd, that it cannot ſave*; and therefore, we need not deſpair of Pardon after a ſinful Life. But if the Nature and Government of God be ſuch, that he neither has, nor will pardon Sin without Satisfaction made to his Juſtice and Majeſty; then the Neceſſity of Virtue is too evident, to permit us to be flatter'd in our Sins: And it may juſtly be expected, Mankind ſhould receive awful Impreſſions from ſuch a Diſpenſation, and thankfully conform to its Deſign.

The Catholick Doctrine, founded on the plain Expreſſions of Scripture, is therefore moſt agreeable to God's Attributes, beſt conſults the Honour of Chriſt, and gives a

juſt

juſt Force to his Death. Which I ſhall leave in this ſhort Summary.

The whole Race of Mankind was degenerate; very ſhort of that Innocence and Perfection, in which God created them.

A God *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, was naturally diſpleas'd with ſuch Apoſtates; and, as a Wiſe and Righteous Governor, was inclin'd to manifeſt his Diſpleaſure to his whole Creation.

Had this Burden been laid upon the Criminals themſelves, they muſt have ſunk under it. The Juſtice, Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God, did therefore unite in this Expedient for their Salvation. Chriſt was deputed to bear their Iniquities; a Perſon, whoſe Dignity was Equal to Such a Diſpenſation, Equal to Such Univerſal Expiation, and proper to repreſent the Malignity of Man's Tranſgreſſions, not to be expiated but at ſo dear a Rate.

By this Method, God's Righteouſneſs and Juſtice were ſatisfy'd, and his Honour ſecur'd. The whole Race of Mankind were reſcu'd from Vice and Miſery; and all Sorts of Wickedneſs were ſufficiently diſcountenanc'd for the future.

The Laſt Thing I ſhall obſerve under this Head, is, That as the Degeneracy of Mankind is here made the Occaſion of this Satisfacti-

tisfaction, it may be ask'd, How does it appear, that Mankind would have been Universally wicked? Why might not the Punishment inflicted for *Adam*'s Sin, prevail with them to be careful to prevent worse? Or, at least, what Cause can be conceiv'd so Uniform and Universal, that all (to a Man) must be suppos'd Vicious, the Objects of Vindictive Justice, without a competent Attonement?

To this 'tis a just Answer, to say, That all Men are now actually criminal, notwithstanding all the Revelations, Assistances and Sollicitations, vouchsaf'd from Heaven. This appears from Scripture. *There is no Man that sinneth not*, says *Solomon*. And again; *There is not a just Man upon Earth, that doth good, and sinneth not. How can Man be justified with God? And how can he be clear, that was born of a Woman?* This our Saviour implies, *He that is without Sin among you, let him cast the first Stone.* Were not this Universal Sinfulness, he would not have suppos'd them all guilty, without any particular Evidence. *All have sinned*, says St. *Paul*, *and come short of the Glory of God: Being justified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ. In many things*, says St. *James*, *we offend all.*

1 Kings 8. 46.
Eccles. 7. 20.
Job 25.
John 8. 7.
Rom. 3. 23.
Jam. 3. 2.

If such, therefore, be the State of Mankind at present, what deplorable Confusion would

would have been introduc'd, had they always liv'd without God in the World?

Whoever requires a Philoſophical Solution of the Difficulties that may be ſtarted from Univerſal Viciouſneſs in ſuch a State; whoever will not believe, that ſuch a Viciouſneſs could have follow'd the Degeneracy of Human Nature, unleſs the Connexion and Progreſs of Cauſes and Effects be made plain to him; he muſt either deny this Fact aſſerted in theſe and many other Scriptures, or elſe account for the Truth of it. But the Fact muſt be allow'd, becauſe the Authority of the Scripture is here ſuppos'd; and 'twould be too hardy, to deny this to be their Senſe. And whenever he has accounted for this Truth to his own Satisfaction, he can want no farther Account of the other.

They have both the ſame Original Cauſe; and the Effects of that Cauſe make themſelves obſerv'd, how deep ſoever the Cauſe it ſelf may be hid. This, therefore, being ſuppos'd the Caſe; I appeal, for the Neceſſity of ſome Attonement, and for the Propriety of Chriſt's, to what has been already ſaid.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Some Conſiderations concerning the Holy Spirit.

THE only Things I can at preſent think of neceſſary to be here inſiſted on, are theſe Three.

1. The Poſſibility and Manner of the Spirit's Operation upon Human Minds.

2. What is Eminently call'd the *Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt.*

3. The Caſe of *Reprobation.*

The Operation of the Spirit.

As to the Firſt of theſe, I am glad I can produce that Advocate of Chriſtianity, (whom I have been more than once oblig'd to contradict) as a True Friend to this Part of it. Towards the End of that Work, he ſays, "'Twill be idle for us, who "know not how our own Spirits move and "act us, to ask in what Manner the Spirit "of God ſhall work upon us? The Wiſ-"dom that accompanies that Spirit, knows "better than we, how we are made, and "how

" how to work upon us; and can't fail in
" it, tho' we perceive or comprehend not
" the Ways of his Operations.

I wish those Persons, for whose Sake he professes to have writ that Book, had been as fond of this Part of it, as they are of others: But Men love to be countenanc'd in their Notions, more than to be convinc'd.

In general, it might be a sufficient Answer to all Hesitations about the Manner or Possibility of this Divine Influence, to appeal to our Saviour's Answer to *Nicodemus*; *The Wind bloweth where it listeth*; and we know neither *whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.* This, and almost all other Parts of Nature, might make Men asham'd of such Objections, as are frequently made against the Doctrines of Christianity, and this in particular. But while Men are conscious of a mutual Influence between their own Souls and Bodies, (of which the best Philosophers have never yet been able to give any probable Account) this alone might prevent all rash Conclusions from the Difficulties that attend the Operations of the Spirit.

Would any Man, to avoid this, question the Being of an Human Spirit distinct from the Body? Yet, if he allows a God, the Influence of a Spirit upon gross Matter, must be confess'd. For God is a Pure Spi-

fit; and had he not such an Influence unconfin'd, there could have been no World: And if so, why not influence Man; either immediately, in his Soul; or mediately, by the Organs of his Body?

As to the particular Manner in which this Influence is administer'd, (excepting such Difficulties as are common to that, and our Converſation with each other) it may, I think, be explain'd to any ſerious Man's Satisfaction. If any Man will be ſtill more particular, and ask, How can theſe Things be? Let him firſt explain to me, how thoſe Words can give my Soul any Notion of what they contain, and of his Deſire that I ſhould anſwer that Queſtion; and when he has done this, I'll undertake to anſwer it, and be as Particular as he is.

In order to ſuch an Explication as may be reaſonably deſir'd, it muſt firſt be fix'd, what Influence may juſtly be expected from this Spirit. The Extravagances into which Men have run concerning it; Irreſiſtible Grace, and Perſonal Enthuſiaſm; theſe muſt be referr'd to their proper Parents, to maintain them as they can. 'Twill be no Damage to this, or any other Part of Chriſtianity, to ſuppoſe them unaccountable.

What may be reaſonably expected from the Spirit, ſeems contain'd in theſe Heads. 1. Faith, in its ſeveral Degrees. 2. Some Sup-

Support againſt Temptations. 3. The Promotion of Virtue. And, 4. The Advancement of Piety.

Faith, the Effect of the Spirit.

The Firſt Thing to be done by it, is, the Eſtabliſhment of our Hearts in the Chriſtian Faith. This is done in a Manner perfectly conſiſtent with the free Uſe of our Faculties. So that Faith is (at once) the Gift of God, and the Regular Concluſion of our own Judgment.

Faith, in the Scripture Senſe, generally ſignifies ſuch a Confidence in the Object, as creates Dependance on it. Faith in God, does not imply only a cold Conſent to his Being; but ſuch Reſignation to his Goodneſs, Wiſdom and Veracity, as will carry us thro' Difficulties, under the Diſcouragement of all Human Probability. Faith in Chriſt is not merely Hiſtorical, but a Dependance on him as our Redeemer. Should a Man be ever ſo clear in his Opinion, that there is an Infinite, Eternal Being, and (at the ſame Time) either ſuppoſe he did not create the World, or does not concern himſelf with it; ſuch a Man has no Faith in God. Should another prove, by the ſtrongeſt Arguments, that Chriſt was the Meſſiah, that all Parts of his Hiſtory are true; that he is now in an Honourable State in Heaven; and expected from him no ſuch Thing as Satisfaction, no Reconciliation

with God, no Interceſſion for him; ſuch a Man has (in his Heart) very little, if any thing, of the Chriſtian Faith. And a Perſon who is not influenc'd by ſuch an Expectation, tho' he conſents to it when propos'd, can be allow'd no more than a dead Faith. And in this View, 'tis plain, there may be Degrees of Faith, Degrees of Life and Vigor in it.

Now, in ſuch a Faith, as the Application of our own Minds may be more ſtrict, or more remiſs; ſo the Influence of the Spirit may be cooler or warmer, and may communicate more or leſs Light, according to the Diſpoſition of the Soul. Faith, therefore, tho' it be not abſolutely convey'd into the Soul, but ſettled there by the Exerciſe of our Reaſon, is properly the Gift of the Spirit, as our Reaſon is variouſly aſſiſted by it; tho' that Aſſiſtance might have been rejected, and the Man might have continued Infidel.

That this Conviction is, in its proper Order, the Effect of this Spirit, is plain from St. *Paul's* Prayer for the *Epheſians*, that *the eyes of their underſtanding being enlighten'd, they might know the hope of Chriſt's calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.*

Epheſ. 1. 18.

And as the Dependance which this Conviction produces may be more or leſs advanc'd,

vanc'd, the Spirit may likewiſe increaſe our Faith; not by multiplying the Objects of it, but by diſpoſing the Soul to a more affectionate Concern for what depends on it. When we inſiſt on the Subſtance of what we hope for, and take Pleaſure in reviewing the Evidence of Things not ſeen; when we make them familiar to our Minds, and contract with them an intimate Friendſhip; when our Hearts are zealouſly affected by them, and think on them as our Supreme Happineſs; in this Senſe, the Apoſtles beſeech their Lord, to increaſe their Faith.

If we reflect on our Converſation with Men, we muſt be ſenſible, that we frequently owe the Knowledge of ſome Truth or other to the Repreſentations made to us; and either do, or do not apprehend the ſame Truth, as it happens to be more clearly or more confuſedly repreſented, or as we have happen'd to be more or leſs diſpos'd for apprehending it. I depend on it, all that are us'd to hear, or to read good Subjects well treated, will eaſily recollect how much they have been affected with a juſt Manner of repreſenting Things; infuſing into their Minds, together with the plain Truth, a ſenſible Concern for it, by giving an entire View (tho', perhaps, in a ſmall Compaſs) both of what depends on it, and of what it ſelf depends on. And ſuch Perſons have, I doubt not, often wonder'd at

the Differunce they have experienc'd within themſelves, from the different Repreſentations of the ſame Truth; how great a Ferment it has made in their Breaſts at one Time, how little at another!

Thus may the Spirit, with the utmoſt Advantage, (beyond all Compariſon with Mankind) repreſent the Subjects of our Faith clearly and diſtinctly, and, at the ſame Time, divert thoſe Indiſpoſitions that might prevent our embracing them. Where Prejudice and ſome inconſiſtent Paſſion have poſſeſs'd the Heart, very plain Truths may be rejected, not only obſtinately, but blindly: And when we have heartily conſented to any Thing, 'tis poſſible it may lye dormant in the Soul. 'Tis poſſible, we may be perfectly convinc'd of ſuch a Place as Heaven, and yet think as little of it as of the moſt diſtant Corners of the Earth, with which we have no Concern. But if the Influence of this Spirit frequently preſents to the Soul the Objects of its Faith, if it diſplays them in all their Dignity, and importunes her to conſider them; this may (in Time) produce a full Aſſurance of Faith, and a proportionable Concern for ſuch a Glorious Proſpect. And thus the Spirit leads us from Faith to Faith, from Opinion to Zeal, from Human Affections to Divine.

And

And in order to secure this Influence, and the proper Use of Faith, 'tis necessary (in such a State as this) to guard against the Offers that will be made us to divert them: And this Guard must be, the Powers of the World to come, the Important Truths of Religion plac'd before the Mind. Till these are drawn off, or corrupted, all Attempts against the Soul will only weaken its Enemies. *The Spirit guards against Temptations.*

What Allurements soever may be in Sin, what Difficulties soever in any Part of our Duty; 'tis hardly possible for any Man, that's affectionately concern'd for the Subjects of his Faith, to be perverted, except only by Surprize, that is, for want of actually thinking on them: And the best of Men may sometimes be irregular, for want of this Presence of Mind; but such Lapses, such Deviations, are soon recover'd.

As the Spirit never offers Violence to the Soul, it may sometimes happen, the Light it gives, the Importunity it uses, may be so far overcome by some glaring Vanity, or some noisy Passion, as not to be observ'd: But generally, in Minds well prepar'd by its former Influence, it opposes the Delusions of Temptations with good Success, by bringing all the Arguments of Religion into View. For, all the Happiness propos'd by the Temptation, in this Case, vanishes; as all Counterfeits in course will,

will, on the unexpected Entrance of thoſe they perſonate.

And as the Spirit may thus diſcountenance particular Temptations, it may likewiſe preſerve us from all vicious Habits, by familiar Repreſentations of the Reaſon and Nature of Things; and by many ſecret Influences both on our Minds and Bodies; diverting dangerous Thoughts, and moderating ſuch Appetites and Affections, as uſually tend to Vice, and often diſpoſe us for it.

Promotes Virtue. On the contrary, 'tis eaſy to conceive how it may forward us in Virtue; by preſenting to our Minds ſuch Thoughts, as leſſen our Eſteem for this World, and excite our Zeal for the other. The Apoſtle, when he bids us not to quench the Spirit, repreſents it as a Flame, that both lights and warms us; ſhews us Uſeful Truths, and gives us a Suitable Concern for them; and all this conſiſtent with the Liberty of our Minds.

This Influence is what is ſo often call'd in the Epiſtles, the *Sanctification of the Spirit*; this is what our Saviour calls, being *born again*, and *being born of the Spirit.*

Aſſiſts our Piety. But, Laſtly, When a Chriſtian is diſengaged from the Confuſion of Vicious Habits, and well diſpos'd to Virtue, he'll take pleaſure in Converſing with God. But ſuch

are

are the Infirmities of his preſent State, ſuch the Clogs and Avocations to which his Soul is ſubject, he ſtands in great Need of ſome Spiritual Aſſiſtance. Such Souls, therefore, as have been conducted by the former Influences of this Spirit, will be entertain'd by it with ſuch Thoughts as are proper in the ſeveral Parts of their Devotions, and (at the ſame Time) affected with ſuch Reverence and Complacency, as are agreeable to that Preſence they are in: And thus may they be led to a Rational and Fervent Piety.

St. *Paul* fully declares this; *The Spirit alſo helpeth our Infirmities: For we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought; but the Spirit it ſelf maketh interceſſion for us, with groans that cannot be utter'd.* And if, from the Influence of this Spirit, we have a juſt Senſe of our own Unworthineſs, of the great Mercies we have receiv'd from God, and of the Unſearchable Riches of Chriſt; our Confeſſions will be full of Indignation againſt Sin; our Thankſgivings will be elevated with Joy and Gratitude; our Supplications will be inflam'd with Spiritual Ambition; and we ſhall be happy as Futurities can make us, in Confidence towards God. Rom. 8. 26.

There are Two other Prejudices concerning this Bleſſed Spirit, which may affect

fect different Minds in a very different Manner; ſome with Inſolent and Profane Sentiments; others, with Dejection, Melancholy, and Deſpondency. The one is the Common Notion of Blaſphemy againſt it; the other, the Horror of its giving Men up to a Reprobate Mind.

Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt.

As to the Firſt, ſome entertain hard Thoughts of God, not able to reconcile ſuch Severity to the Uſual Character of his Goodneſs. That a blaſphemous Expreſſion ſhould immediately forfeit all Pretenſions to Heaven, whatever the Blaſphemer might be in other Parts of his Conduct; this is raſhly concluded an Extremity of Juſtice, the Effect of Violent and Implacable Reſentments.

Others afflict their Souls with the moſt bitter Apprehenſions; becauſe, under the Diſorder of their Spirits, this (among other Things) preſents it ſelf to their Thoughts; and becauſe they think of it, they immediately condemn themſelves as guilty of committing it, and paſs on themſelves that dreadful Sentence that was at firſt pronounc'd upon it.

A juſt Apprehenſion of the Nature of this Crime, may probably take off ſuch Reflections, caſt by too many either on God, or themſelves.

'Tis

'Tis plain, in general, that the Subject of our Saviour's Diſcourſe was Blaſphemy againſt God's Spirit. Wherein this Blaſphemy did particularly conſiſt, has been much diſputed. St. *John* does not inſiſt on this Part of our Saviour's Hiſtory; and, of the other Three Evangeliſts, St. *Matthew* is much the largeſt. St. *Luke* omits the Occaſion of the Words; but 'tis evident from St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, that this Blaſphemy conſiſted in the contemptuous and obſtinate Rejecting the Evidence of ſuch Miracles as were perform'd by it.

The only Queſtion that will bear debating, ſeems this: Whether the Miracles deſign'd, were thoſe which Chriſt perform'd by the Spirit of God; or thoſe which the Spirit it ſelf ſhould perform, by its own immediate Operation, after Chriſt's Aſcenſion? This latter ſeems moſt probable, by the great Diſtinction Chriſt makes between the Son of Man, and that Holy Spirit. Blaſphemy (of all Kinds) againſt himſelf, he declares pardonable; but, on Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Spirit, he paſſes a Final Sentence.

It has been ſaid, This Blaſphemy againſt himſelf, to which he promiſes Pardon, was Perſonal; reflecting on his Morals, not on his Miracles; reproaching him as a *Glutton, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*: But, as he argues himſelf, they

they muſt either make the Tree good, and its Fruit good, or elſe make the Tree corrupt, and its Fruit corrupt. If they condemn'd him, 'twas impoſſible his Miracles ſhould maintain their Authority: They argu'd regularly and conſiſtently from ſuch a Character, when they imputed his Miracles to *Beelzebub.*

It ſeems therefore probable, that his Meaning more at large was this: My Character not being ſo fully eſtabliſh'd, there being ſo many Prejudices againſt me; my Commiſſion and Buſineſs upon Earth not having been fully explain'd; whoever does at preſent reject my Authority, and the Miracles that confirm it, may hereafter be convinc'd by more Unexceptionable Evidence, and ſo find Mercy. But when the whole Courſe of my Diſpenſation ſhall be finiſh'd, when I ſhall have manifeſted my ſelf to the World; when I am riſen from the Dead, and declar'd the Son of God with Power; when I have aſcended to my Father; when I have ſent the Bleſſed Spirit; when that ſhall appear with its full Demonſtration and Power, to accompliſh all Things: When the Evidence of God's Kingdom, being come unto ye, is ſo clear; they that obſtinately perſiſt in their Infidelity, they that reject and blaſpheme the Spirit, are without Remedy.

The

The Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, the Declaration of God's Counſels with reſpect to Mankind, and the Rational Conviction that ſhould make them heartily ſubmit to it; this was reſerv'd as the Work of that Bleſſed Spirit. Then, therefore, was the Time for fixing Mens Characters: They that ſtood out againſt all this, eſpecially they that blaſphem'd it, were invincibly and unpardonably perverſe.

From the moſt dreadful and ſtrict Senſe of theſe Words, and other Expreſſions in the ſame Chapter, concerning the ſame Subject, ſome may conceive Irreverent Thoughts of God; but ſuch Thoughts are too much like the Blaſphemy it ſelf. However Things may appear to us at preſent, we are always to ſuppoſe God Righteous and Merciful: He has appointed a Day, in which he will explain and juſtify his Treatment of all his Creatures; we ought, therefore, to judge nothing (in ſuch Caſes) before that Solemn Time.

But, however, we may obſerve theſe Two Things, to prevent all Temptation to reflect on God.

Firſt, It can hardly be ſuppos'd, that any Serious and Good Man, however liable to Miſtakes, would be ſo preſumptuous as to utter ſuch Blaſphemies. It may be taken as a ſufficient Argument of the contrary, that

Acts 2. 13. that the Perſons recorded in the New Teſtament for this Crime, were notoriouſly and ſcandalouſly Vicious in all Parts of their Character; and thoſe who have ſince imitated them in their Blaſphemy, have not much exceeded them in their Lives. Such, therefore, if they are abſolutely rejected, are not condemn'd meerly for Expreſſions, but for the Rancor of thoſe Hearts, out of which only ſuch Expreſſions could proceed.

Secondly, The ſeeming Severity of this Sentence has been ſo interpreted, as to ſilence all Complaints. Chriſt poſitively ſays, that whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him. This leaves no Room for Repentance; it ſeems rather to declare particularly againſt it, in theſe Words, *neither in this World,* [*αἰῶνι*] *nor in the World to come.* Theſe Words being underſtood to take off all Hopes of eſcaping in that Age, or the Age that was coming. Under the *Jewiſh*, or the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, the Wrath denounc'd in theſe Words will not allow us to put in any Condition, tho' the moſt ſorrowful Repentance. They abſolutely declare, ſuch Blaſphemers ſhall be puniſh'd. But this Interpretation may ſuppoſe no other Puniſhment neceſſary, but Temporal, or Providential: And more particularly, it may appear, probably, a Share in that Vengeance

that should be taken on the Nation of the *Jews*; which Christ often took Occasion to represent to them in such a Manner, as would have affected any People but themselves.

They who are satisfy'd with this Interpretation, need look no farther for a full Vindication of the Justice of this Sentence.

But, I think, this Interpretation will not hold. Our Saviour, in the 36th Verse, mentions the Day of Judgment, and says, *Every idle word* (as if he had said, not only this Blasphemy) *shall then be accounted for*; which fixes this Punishment to that Day. Again, St. *Mark* declares of this Criminal, that he shall never have Forgiveness, but is in Danger of Eternal Damnation. What's here translated being in Danger, signifies, according to the constant Use of the Original Word [ἔνοχος] actually guilty: As, *Matth.* 26. 66. [ἔνοχος] guilty of Death: And actually seiz'd by any thing; as *Heb.* 2. 15. ἔνοχοι δουλείας, possess'd by a slavish Fear; Πάντων ἔνοχος, says St. *James*, guilty of all. These Words, therefore, ἔνοχος αἰωνίου κρίσεως, in danger of Eternal Damnation, imply no less than their being condemn'd in God's Eternal Judgment. And what could prevent it? Such Persons resisted and blasphem'd the most powerful Means of Salvation. For Blaspheming, here,

Mark 3. 29.

James 2. 10.

here, does not mean a ſingle Expreſſion, but a continued Oppoſition and Abuſe of that Bleſſed Spirit, in all its Power.

'Tis charitably ſuppos'd, that this Heinous Sin againſt God's Bleſſed Spirit cannot now be committed; at leaſt, not in all its Aggravations: But it may be fear'd, that Virulent Oppoſition to all Reveal'd Religion, and that Temper with which 'tis treated, cannot fall far ſhort of it. The want of ſenſible Evidence, ſeems not to have much greater Weight in Favour of ſuch Perſons, ſuch malicious Blaſphemers, than not Seeing would have in Excuſe for wilful Miſchief. But, however,

Melancholick Perſons not guilty of it.

It is certainly impoſſible thoſe Perſons ſhould be guilty of this Sin, who believe all that Bleſſed Spirit has atteſted. Whatever a preſent Cloud of Melancholy may ſuggeſt, and whatever they may have to accuſe themſelves of, ſo long as they believe the Chriſtian Faith, they cannot commit this Blaſphemy.

They may poſſibly think of it; all the Aggravations of it may paſs before their Minds, and ſomething like Conſenting to ſuch a Crime may be forc'd upon them; but ſuch Thoughts have no other Conſent, than ſuch as Tranſient Objects have, paſſing unexpected before our Eyes. The Mind does as naturally apprehend Things duly

duly presented to it, as the Eyes see, when open, what's before them. If any Thing disagreeable, or indecent, offers unsought for, 'tis no Crime to see it: And in some Dispositions of the Spirits, the Imagination will impose upon the Soul such Thoughts as she would not chuse, and yet, perhaps, can't divert, when thus impos'd. And wicked Spirits may take the Advantage of such Dispositions, and urge their own Suggestions. But in such Cases, there is no Guilt at all; so far are such Persons from this Unpardonable Sin. And if nothing else could convince them of this, the Concern they feel at the Apprehension of it, might be full Conviction. This is effectually disclaiming, with the utmost Horror, the Subject of such Thoughts; and the most innocent Mind can do no more. There is, therefore, no Ground to charge this Blessed Spirit with condemning Men, merely for a blasphemous Expression, much less for having Blasphemy impos'd as an Object of the Mind.

The Last Thing to be consider'd, relating to this Spirit, is the Case of *Reprobation.* *The Case of Reprobation.*

The Two most Remarkable Passages in the New Testament, applicable to this Important Question, are in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*; the one in the Sixth, the other

in the Twelfth Chapter. That in the Sixth, declares it impoſſible to renew the Perſons (there ſpoke of) to Repentance. That in the Twelfth, aſſerts the ſame Thing of the Perſon there caution'd againſt: He is deſcrib'd by a Reference to *Eſau*, as finding *no Place for Repentance, tho' he* ſhould ſeek *it carefully with tears.*

Heb. 6. St. *Paul* juſtifies his diſregarding the Apoſtates, in the Sixth Chapter, from ſeveral Aggravations ariſing from the Advantages they had ſo much abus'd.

Firſt, They had been enlighten'd. Baptiſm is uſually call'd Illumination; and, by reaſon of the Extraordinary Light receiv'd in it, an Unconverted (or Heathen) State is often repreſented as a State of Darkneſs. Thus our Saviour, by St. *John*, is deſcrib'd as the *Light of the World.* And if we have any Senſe of our own Unworthineſs, and of the Majeſty of God, any Conſciouſneſs of the Meanneſs, as well as Ingratitude and Miſery that attended the Fall of Man, or any tolerable Notions of the Perfections of his Maker; ſurely we muſt acknowledge this Bleſſing as a moſt Important Obligation.

But then, how inſupportable an Aggravation muſt it be on Apoſtate Chriſtians! Such as have wilfully extinguiſh'd this

Light; such as have chosen Darkness before it, and resolv'd to live without God in the World!

Secondly, They had tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and been made Partakers of the Holy Ghost; which St. *Paul* declares it to no purpose to insist on any longer, they having had sensible Evidence of its Power, and yet resisted it. This Heavenly Gift, this Participation of the Holy Ghost, is to be interpreted the Extraordinary Influence of the Spirit, such as enabled the Persons that receiv'd it to perform various Miracles, for the Confirmation of the Faith. But it may be question'd, whether the Persons St. *Paul* here speaks of, as having tasted this Gift, must be suppos'd to have receiv'd this Gift themselves, or only to have had familiar Opportunities of observing it in others; whether they had themselves wrought Miracles in Confirmation of that Faith they renounc'd, or had only been convinc'd of its Truth by the Miracles they had seen wrought by others: Their having receiv'd so much Benefit from it, may come up to the Force of these Expressions: And if we suppose no more in them, this will fully answer the Use St. *Paul* makes of them. For nothing more could be urg'd for their Recovery; they could be press'd with no stronger Arguments. Tho' a Personal Power of Miracles may be more efficacious in con-

firming a Believer, it cannot be expected to make one: For that muſt ſuppoſe it given to an Infidel; and in this Caſe, to the worſt of Infidels, an Apoſtate. And the meaneſt Senſe that can be put on theſe Words, is a ſevere Aggravation of their baſe Apoſtacy.

Thirdly, They had taſted of the good Word of God. This anſwers to Faith and Repentance, in the firſt Verſe: Faith contains their Duty; and the Doctrine of Repentance, a moſt comfortable Encouragement to ſupport them in it, to ſuſtain their Infirmities, and encourage them to go on unto Perfection. They had been caution'd againſt the Corruptions of their Nature, and aſſur'd, that God would accept their Sincerity, notwithſtanding their incurable Infirmities. Thoſe Inclinations, which to a Heathen might appear excuſable, have been explain'd to them by Revelation. They are admoniſh'd, on the moſt indiſputable Authority, that Vice (of all Kinds) deſtroys that Happineſs, and that Perfection, for which their Nature was originally deſign'd: They are plainly directed to ſuch Virtues, as are proper to promote that Happineſs, and to accompliſh that Perfection. They had been deliver'd from the Confuſion of Various Deities, and the powerful Infection of their Vicious Examples: They had been taught to worſhip One God, *in Spirit and*

in Truth; a God of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity.

Should ſuch Duties, and ſuch a God, be preach'd to a Heathen; ſhould he be preſs'd to recommend himſelf to ſuch a God by ſuch Duties, he might object, plauſibly enough, that he fears 'tis to no purpoſe: That the Viciouſneſs of his paſt Life, muſt make his Reconciliation to ſuch a God deſperate; and that if a Pardon for what was paſt might be hop'd for, yet he had no Reaſon to expect to practiſe ſuch Duties for the future with Conſtancy and Integrity, and that therefore he muſt e'en be contented as he was. But, ſhould the Chriſtian Doctrine of Repentance be confirm'd to him, this would fully and clearly anſwer his Objection: Upon this Foundation he might, and ſhould embrace Chriſtianity. But if he afterwards ſinks again into the Dregs of Nature, no greater Encouragement can be propos'd to him, to raiſe him again out of them; and therefore, 'tis highly probable, he would periſh in them. And this was the Caſe of the Apoſtates in this Chapter, whom the Apoſtle pronounces it impoſſible to recover.

Laſtly, They had taſted of the Powers of the World to come. If, by the World to come, we underſtand the Diſpenſation of Chriſtianity, the Age of the Meſſiah, then by the Powers of it, we muſt underſtand

the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of the Faith; which ſuch Perſons having rejected, could have no greater Evidence, no clearer Teſtimony of its Truth; and therefore were irrecoverable. But this is the Second Argument.

By the World to come, therefore, we ſhould (probably) underſtand that State which is to ſucceed this Viſible Creation, when the preſent Frame ſhall be diſſolv'd: And the Powers of it muſt be, what the Apoſtle mentions in the Second Verſe, the Reſurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment: And in this Senſe, they very properly follow the good Word of God, and are a ſtrong Preſumption, that the Perſons here ſpoke of, would never be renew'd to Repentance. Theſe are ſuch powerful Arguments, that whoever can overcome them, may deſpiſe all others. This was the Caſe of theſe Men.

Such Perſons the Apoſtle compares to barren Ground, on which God rains in vain; which is, for that Reaſon, reprobate, and nigh unto Curſing. He then paſſes to faithful Diſciples, and ſays, he hopes *better things of* them, *and things that accompany Salvation.* The Rain from God, therefore, muſt here be allow'd to repreſent the Spirit, or, at leaſt, the Effects of it: Curſing muſt repreſent the Condemnation of

thoſe Perſons; and Burning, their Puniſhment.

As the Terror of the Lord, the Eternal Vengeance of the Almighty, are in themſelves too dreadful to ſuffer any Man to take pleaſure in aggravating, or miſrepreſenting them; ſo Common Humanity ſhould give him ſome Concern when he applies them, tho' but in general, to any of his Brethren, how wicked ſoever. But for this Purpoſe were they reveal'd: And I think it muſt be allow'd, that this Caſe amounts to ſtrict Reprobation; a State, without any Hopes of Recovery.

When Perſons are out of the Reach of all Regular Means, not to be influenc'd or affected by them, it is indeed poſſible for an Extraordinary Impulſe of God's Spirit, to make them ſenſible of their Condition, and turn their Hearts once more to Religion.

Again: As in Honeſt and Sincere Minds, the Truth is not always equally viſible; as that Proof, or Reaſon, which at one Time ſeem'd Imperfect, or Impertinent, may at another ſeem Full and Indiſputable; ſo, in Vicious Minds, thoſe Arguments that are deſpis'd at one Time, may be receiv'd with Reverence at another. Thoſe Terrors, that at one Time are ſcoff'd at as vain Fears, may at another make deep Impreſſions; make the Scoffer tremble, and

own them as gracious Warnings to *fly from the Wrath to come.*

Modern Apoſtates. But St. *Paul* ſeems to leave no Room for either of theſe Reſorts. What Difference may appear between the Caſe of thoſe Apoſtates, and the Apoſtates of our Days, may deſerve to be well conſider'd. Ours are of Two Sorts: Such as reject the Faith, and indulge thoſe Vicious Liberties from which it would reſtrain them; and thoſe that profeſs the Chriſtian Faith, but are to every good Work reprobate.

Pleas conſider'd. The former may plead, if ever they become ſenſible of their Condition, that the Perſons here reprobated by St. *Paul*, had ſome peculiar Advantages which aggravated their Wickedneſs, which cannot be charg'd to their Account.

The greateſt Force of this Plea conſiſts in ſuppoſing, that the Apoſtates in this Chapter were themſelves inveſted with the Gift of Miracles, which muſt indeed make their Apoſtacy an everlaſting Reproach to human Nature. But this, as I obſerved before, is not affirm'd by St. *Paul*, nor is it neceſſary to his Argument: 'Tis ſufficient both to interpret his Expreſſions, and to make good his Argument, to ſuppoſe 'em only to have felt the Force of this Evidence on their Hearts; and then the Difference is no more than this, The one ſaw Miracles perform'd, the other has as good Evidence

for the Performance of 'em, as the Nature of the Thing will bear. If they inſiſt on it, that ſeeing 'em perform'd makes a deeper Impreſſion, they may take their Anſwer from our Saviour, *If they believe not Moſes and the Prophets*, confirm'd and explain'd by himſelf and his Apoſtles, *neither will they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead.* As to the latter, vicious Believers, 'tis uſeleſs: To ſuppoſe the utmoſt Advantage, to ſuppoſe the Apoſtates in this Chapter had themſelves that heavenly Gift, and did themſelves work Miracles; if any Uſe be made of this Suppoſition, it muſt be to aggravate their Perverſeneſs in renouncing the Faith thus confirm'd; and the vicious Chriſtian, to apply this to his Purpoſe, muſt plead, That he has not the ſame Means of confirming his Faith. But 'tis not his Faith, but his Practice that's in queſtion; ſince he declares, he does ſtedfaſtly believe he wants nothing to confirm his Faith. But it may poſſibly be ſaid, That ſuch a Gift would continually admoniſh 'em to conſider and apply the Articles of their Faith, and not ſuffer 'em ſo groſsly to contradict themſelves: And 'tis probable it would have this Effect for ſome time. But as 'tis their own Fault, that they don't conſider and apply Divine Truths without ſuch an Admonition; ſo 'tis probable, when 'twas grown familiar, 'twou'd loſe its Authority. The only Thing there-

fore

fore he can insist on to distinguish himself in this Case, is his Believing, which St. *Paul*'s Apostates did not. But supposing both equally vicious, this Circumstance, that the one renounc'd the Faith, whereas the other has not, seems not very considerable; the Devils also believe and tremble. But Faith without Works is dead; and, like a Child dead in the Womb, may destroy the Mother, but can be no Comfort to her. This dead Faith, if particularly consider'd, will probably turn to the Disadvantage of such Professors. The Infidelity of Apostates is very justly condemn'd; nothing can be said in Defence of it; nor need we lessen the Guilt of Apostacy, to make that of vicious Professors more conspicuous. But if they really mean any thing, when they say they believe the Truth of Christianity, and depend on Christ for Salvation, the only Consequence seems to be this, That their Vices are loaded with Presumption by their Faith, and bring on Christ more Shame than the Cross.

The only real Difference seems to be this: The Apostle was qualify'd to pronounce peremptorily on those original Apostates, but no Man can at present fix a personal Reprobation on the most dissolute; no Man knows how God in his Wisdom and Righteousness may deal with 'em.

But

But from the whole, theſe two Things ſeem certain; Firſt, That 'tis poſſible for Men to bring themſelves into this miſerable State: And Secondly, That whenever it becomes their Caſe, their Wickedneſs will abundantly juſtify God's Spirit for not ſtriving for ever with 'em.

The Caſe of *Eſau* apply'd to Apoſtates in the Twelfth Chapter of the ſame Epiſtle, proceeds much in the ſame manner; only with this Difference, that here the Reprobate is ſuppos'd at length ſenſible of his Condition, but too late. Heb. 12.

And this Caſe ſeems plainly apply'd in a Caution to all Chriſtians; *Let us have* [or retain] *grace, whereby we may ſerve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a conſuming fire.* As if the Apoſtle had ſaid, This Grace may be profuſely waſted, and ſucceeded by nothing but Impiety, or fruitleſs Lamentations; let us therefore take care in time. V. 28, 29.

Sin, as 'tis contrary to our Nature, does gradually corrupt it, and indiſpoſe it for any good Impreſſions; and as 'tis contrary to God's Nature, it gradually quenches his Spirit: Thus by degrees it diſqualifies us for the Influence of all Means of Salvation, Natural and Supernatural, Human and Divine.

The Dread of this fatal Conſequence ought to alarm Nature, and make Men conſider

ſider in good Earneſt, what their Condition really is; whether their Souls are indeed in ſuch a Method as may be depended on, or not; whether improving and going on to Perfection, or decaying and ſickening to eternal Death: but it ſhould never cheriſh any undutiful Thoughts of God.

Obſtinate Oppoſition is ſaid to grieve his Holy Spirit: From whence appears its gracious Inclination to aſſiſt the worſt of Men; as long as they are willing to permit it, it intreats 'em to be reconcil'd to God. They are not given over to a reprobate Mind, till they like not to retain God in their Knowledge.

But God is no more oblig'd to preſerve the Soul by Violence, whether it will or no, than he is to preſerve the Body. If we may conclude from the Infinity of God's Goodneſs, that he muſt and will protect us, why ſhould we except any Part of us? Why may he not as well be depended on for the Cure or Prevention of all Pains and Diſeaſes, and of Death it ſelf? Theſe are great Evils to Men, and 'tis certainly in his Power to remove 'em; and as he does not, he cannot be oblig'd by an immoveable Inclination to Mercy, to ſave obſtinate Sinners. If he gives us the Conveniencies of Life, the proper Means of a comfortable Subſiſtence in this World, no Man can reflect on his Providence, though we ſhould deſtroy our ſelves.

selves. It can't be deny'd, but he might prevent it: He might prevent likewise all natural and moral Evils, all Pains and Uneasiness that disturb the Body, all Sins and Vices that corrupt the Soul: But this wou'd not leave him consistent with himself with respect to the Body; nor would it be treating us like Men with respect to the Soul, since 'twou'd destroy our Freedom.

But however, we may observe, Every Intermission of this blessed Influence is not absolute Desertion; every dark Cloud does not put an End to our Day of Salvation. The Criminal in the 5th Chapter of St. *Paul's* first to the *Corinthians*, while he was given over to Satan, must be suppos'd under the Displeasure of God's Spirit; but yet his Case was not desperate; he was deliver'd to Satan, that his present Punishment might reform and save him. *Intermission, not Desertion.*

And from the most dreadful Case that can be suppos'd, the only proper Conclusion is this, To take effectual Care that it may not become our own. And whoever find in their Hearts a Desire to forsake their Sins, if they might be accepted; an Inclination to submit to God, and to serve him for the future faithfully, if there might be any Hopes of his Assistance; such Persons may depend on it, they are not deserted: They ought to impute that Desire, that Inclination

tion to God's Spirit, and immediately apply themſelves to the proper Uſe of it.

Dread of it on the Mind.

And whoever feel an unaccountable Dread and Terror upon their Souls, a melancholick Concern upon ſuppoſing themſelves deſerted, without plain Reaſon for it from their paſt Lives; ſuch ſhould conſider, how unworthy ſuch Thoughts are of God; a God not willing that any ſhould periſh; a God that breaks not the bruiſed Reed, that quenches not the ſmoaking Flax. There is no Ground, either in Reaſon or Scripture, to ſuppoſe any deſerted, till they become improper Subjects for the Influence of ſuch a Spirit; till that Spirit can do nothing but work Miracles, and perhaps be blaſphem'd in working 'em.

I ſhall conclude this Chapter with this ſhort Obſervation, That the original word ἀδόκιμος, conſtantly us'd in the New Teſtament for Reprobate, does not ſo much repreſent the Will of the Rejector, as the worthleſs Condition of the Thing rejected; as in counterfeit Coin, or rotten Sheep.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Concerning Faith, and the Obligation all are under, to whom the Goſpel is made known, to believe the Doctrines of Chriſtianity.

TO think juſtly of Chriſtianity, we muſt conſider it, Firſt, As a plain Revelation, and a full Accompliſhment of what God frequently hinted to the old World concerning a Mediator: And then, Secondly, As an advantageous Inſtitution of proper Means to improve our Minds, proper Duties to qualify us the more compleatly for the purchas'd Inheritance, and unuſual Aſſiſtance in order to their ſucceſsful Practice.

The former Conſideration of it, as exhibiting to us the actual, viſible Oblation for the Sins of Mankind, repreſents to us the certain Effects of that Oblation; the great End, the general Reconciliation of God to Mankind, as far as it depended on their Redeemer.

The latter Conſideration of Chriſtianity, as a Divine Diſpenſation, a Reveal'd Conſtitution

ſtitution of Religion; this repreſents it as a Means God has put into our Hands to ſpiritualize our Affections, to improve our Souls; and by that Improvement, to diſpoſe and entitle 'em to a higher Manſion in Heaven.

As this is the Deſign of Chriſtianity, and a Deſign that muſt be acknowledg'd, if we have any Regard for our Nature, a great Bleſſing; ſo it is declar'd to be accompliſh'd by Faith. All Divine Revelations, and all Worſhips in Conſequence of 'em, tend to improve Mens Minds; and all pretended Revelations, dictating Idolatries and the Worſhip of Devils, will be found, upon Examination, always to contain ſomething that tends to corrupt 'em. But Chriſtianity is the perfect Will of God; and when this is ſolemnly proclaim'd to the World, can it be wonder'd at, that Faith is ſtrictly inſiſted on? Is it worthy of the Wiſdom and Majeſty of Heaven, to publiſh ſuch a Diſpenſation, and at the ſame time declare, 'tis of no great Moment whether Men regard it or not?

Faith, why neceſſary.

The Goſpel is, however, thought too rigorous, in putting Mens eternal Happineſs upon Faith. Too many profeſs to think, that a good Diſpoſition of Mind might be obtain'd without it; and if ſo, why ſhould Salvation depend on it? More particularly, they think it too ſevere, be-

cauſe

cauſe there are ſome Myſteries, and ſome Things, tho' not in their Nature myſterious, yet hard to be underſtood.

The Unreaſonableneſs of all Complaints againſt Religion on the Account of Faith, as if an Obligation to believe its Articles were a great Hardſhip, an Impoſition and Grievance upon human Life; this muſt appear to any ſober Mind, when the Tendency of theſe Articles is conſider'd.

God is pleas'd to propoſe ſuch Things, only to make Men better, and conſequently happier: As 'tis acknowledg'd from the Nature of human Mind, that Men can't be forc'd to believe what they can't underſtand; ſo it muſt be acknowledg'd from the Nature of God, That they are certainly oblig'd to give the ſtricteſt Attention to all his Revelations, and to believe what they can underſtand, tho' they can by no means conceive how it can be true.

There is in all the Objections againſt Faith in general, this fundamental Error, They ſuppoſe it impos'd by the Authority of God, as a Task on Mankind; whereas 'tis indeed, in all its Parts, the immediate Effect of his Kindneſs and Concern for us; 'tis propos'd for our Guide and Aſſiſtance. But whatever Kindneſs of great Moment is offer'd us, 'tis poſſible we may be much the worſe for that Offer: We may be prevail'd on by vicious Inclinations to deſpiſe and *Miſtaken as a Task.*

neglect it; and the Ingratitude of this may very juſtly be reſented; and 'twill likewiſe very much add to the Depravity of our Minds. An Obligation therefore to believe, muſt follow by a natural Neceſſity, whenever God is pleas'd to propoſe any thing from Heaven. Where thro' any natural Infirmity, a Man can't apprehend Divine Revelations, God will not impute it to him as a Crime. But unleſs we will ſuppoſe God ſolemnly to reveal uſeleſs Things, it muſt be a Misfortune and Prejudice to ſuch a Man, as he loſes the Uſe that might be made of 'em. When Careleſneſs and Neglect, or any other criminal Cauſe, keeps Men Strangers to 'em, they not only incur this Prejudice, but affront God by ſuch rude and ungrateful Diſregard. But when they declare in general againſt the Obligation of Believing, as an unreaſonable Incumbrance upon Life; this is directly declaring againſt being interrupted in their Humours, the Entertainments and Buſineſs they have choſen. God has graciouſly made theſe Applications to 'em, to inſtruct 'em in the Wiſdom of Heaven, and form their Souls for its Happineſs: But they had rather be excus'd, and proceed in their own way. And if ſo, they muſt; but they muſt likewiſe anſwer for the Conſequence.

To ſuppoſe in general, That the ſame Perſons may be as well diſpos'd without any

any of the Articles of Faith, as they may be with them; this is declaring all Revelations uſeleſs; which might be much eaſier ſuppos'd before any have been made, than afterwards, for then it charges on God vain and inſignificant Diſpenſations.

Nay, farther; Tho' 'tis certain, where God has vouchſaf'd no Revelations, 'tis poſſible for Men to obtain ſuch a Diſpoſition, as will be accepted by him for the Sake of Chriſt; yet it does not from hence follow, that the ſame Low State of Virtue will be accepted in thoſe Men, who have heard and rejected the Goſpel. And yet 'tis mere Deluſion, to ſuppoſe ſuch a State of Virtue conſiſtent with obſtinate Infidelity; this poiſons the Soul, and can hardly leave any Part of it uninfected.

The meaneſt Accompliſhment in Virtue that's acceptable to God in the meaneſt Heathen, contains in it a Submiſſion to what appears to be God's Will; an Habitual Obedience to it, and, at leaſt, a General Repentance for particular Tranſgreſſions. But this cannot be allow'd to our preſent Infidels; 'tis (in General) to be fear'd, that they chuſe Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are Evil. Whatever Exceptions may poſſibly be found among 'em, they are diſtinctly known to God, and ſhall find (without doubt) all the Equity that their Caſe is capable of pleading.

A General Plea anſwer'd.

But the General Plea in this Caſe cannot be allow'd: This Plea is, That 'tis not in our Power to believe, or not believe, the Truth of any Thing propos'd to us; but that we naturally conclude according to the Evidence we ſee for it: And therefore, if the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith appear falſe to us, we can't help it.

It is not only true, that the Corruption of the Underſtanding is at leaſt as Criminal as the Corruption of the Will; being the Corruption of the ſame Mind, conſider'd only in different Ways of acting and being employ'd. But it muſt be allow'd likewiſe, that Vicious Habits in the Mind obſtruct the Evidence of Divine Truth; and when a Solemn, Publick, Univerſal Revelation, can't make its way into the Mind, ſuch Habits may juſtly be ſuſpected. We may obſerve, Repentance was the Harbinger to Chriſtianity; accordingly, the firſt Converts to it, were ſuch as had been prepar'd by that. The Firſt Publick Congregation of converted *Jews* are ſaid to have been *Eſſenes*, a Sect of ſevere Lives, contemplative, and retir'd from the World. Among the *Gentiles*, the Church of Chriſt was founded upon ſuch as had been prepar'd to be Chriſtians, by having left their Idolatry, and join'd in the Worſhip of the True God; but yet, were not perfect Proſelytes,

ſelytes, not circumcis'd, not entire *Jews*, and therefore not entangled in their Prejudices.

And, from the Reaſon given for Repentance by Chriſt himſelf, (*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*) we may conclude, that the Foundation of a Chriſtian Spirit is Moral Virtue: And from hence likewiſe we can't help concluding, that the Reaſon of the General Infidelity of thoſe Times, was the want of this Preparatory Repentance; the want of Serious, Regular, Virtuous Diſpoſitions. And ſince our Saviour pronounces to ſuch Infidels, that *the Wrath of God abides on them*; we muſt conclude, that 'tis not ſufficient to juſtify any Infidel, that he really acts according to his preſent Judgment: If his Vices, of any Kind, have occaſion'd that Judgment, all its Conſequences ſhall be imputed to him. Matt. 4. 17.

For a Man to prefer Darkneſs to Light, *i. e.* Error to Truth, while he conſiders 'em as ſuch, is naturally impoſſible. All Men are ſincere in their Errors at the Inſtant of embracing them; that is, they really think them Truths; were it not ſo, they would not be miſtaken. But the Steps which brought them into ſuch Errors being Vicious, this condemns them. Every Infidel ſuppoſes his Darkneſs to be Light; and generally not only ſo, but brighter too than ordinary: But the Cauſes of ſuch Volun-

tary Diſtraction may be highly Criminal. How far thoſe Cauſes have been Vicious, God alone is a competent Judge; but, ſo far as they have been ſo, we may ſafely conclude, the Effects of them ſhall be condemn'd.

Myſteries complain'd of. Nor is there greater Reaſon for that other Objection againſt Faith's being made Neceſſary; in which 'tis repreſented as an Unreaſonable Hardſhip, to be oblig'd to believe what we cannot comprehend.

Becauſe ſuch is the Importance of the Chriſtian Revelations, that we can't perfectly ſee thro' them, and explain all that they imply; therefore this Obligation to believe, is cenſur'd as an Obligation to a Natural Impoſſibility.

Anſwer. Myſteries are loudly complain'd of; and theſe Complaints are made on Two different Accounts: The one is, either Treacherous Impiety, or an Irregular Deſire of Knowledge, repining that any Thing ſhould be conceal'd from it. The plain Anſwer to this is, God has reveal'd as much as was proper to lead us to Piety and Virtue; what remains would, perhaps, be to us (at preſent) Matter only for Uſeleſs Curioſity. Should a Labouring Man neglect his Buſineſs, to attend to Curious Speculations; he'd ſoon feel his Folly, by the Diſtreſs he'd bring himſelf into. There may be infinite Diſcoveries that will entertain the

Life

Life of Heaven, that might be Hindrances to Man while he continues in the Body. He has ſo much Work upon his Hands, he can't be at Leiſure to attend them. Such Attention, while it makes Angels happy, might be a Prejudice to him. But this is not our preſent Concern.

The other Complaint is founded on a plain Miſtake; ſuppoſing Men oblig'd to conſent to that, of which they have no Notion: As if the Myſterious, or Conceal'd Part, were the Object of our Faith. We may ſee plain Reaſon to believe a Thing is, or will be, upon God's Authority, tho' we don't apprehend how; and we may ſee as plain Reaſon to believe, upon the ſame Authority, that there's more in it than is at preſent diſcover'd, tho' we have no Notion of the Unenlighten'd Part. But then, in both Caſes, what we have no Notion of, is not the Object of our Faith, except in general, and implicitly. We are to believe what's reveal'd, and make a grateful Uſe of it: That Uſe was God's Reaſon for revealing it. He did not propoſe to entangle, or haraſs our Minds, or fatigue them with what's impoſſible.

Difficulties in Scripture urg'd.

It is likewiſe ſometimes inſiſted on, That ſince there are ſo many Difficulties and Obſcurities in the Scripture, which is the Rule of Faith; Faith it ſelf cannot be neceſſary: It cannot be conſiſtent with God's

Goodneſs, to condemn any Man for the want of it.

Whenever this Objection is made, 'tis (I believe) founded on thoſe Remarkable Words of St. *Peter*; *As alſo in all his Epiſtles, ſpeaking in them of theſe things; in which are ſome things hard to be underſtood, which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt; as they do alſo the other Scriptures, to their own deſtruction.*

2 Pet. 3. 16.

St. Peter *explain'd.*

This, I think, is the only one that can countenance it; and therefore, it may be proper to conſider this Text firſt, before I give any General Anſwer to this Point. And if the Perſons that make this Objection, will not undertake to juſtify the Politick Tenderneſs of the Church of *Rome*, in keeping all Perſons of an ordinary Education from Reading the Scriptures, on the ſame Pretence; if they will allow preventing Contentions by ſuppreſſing the Scriptures, to be ſomething like getting rid of our Pains, by deſtroying the Senſe of Feeling; if they think our Natural Reaſon valuable, notwithſtanding the Errors we fall into, which are all prevented in an Ideot; and, Laſtly, if they think this Reſtraint ſomething like forbidding the Scriptures to have been copy'd at firſt, for fear of thoſe Various Readings that have ſince happen'd; I have good Hopes, they may be convinc'd of

of the Unreaſonableneſs of this Objection, as well as of that Reſtraint.

Firſt, It is certain, St. *Peter* does not ſpeak of the Things here meant in every one of his Epiſtles: Theſe Words therefore, *In all his Epiſtles*, only impute to all the Wiſdom mention'd in the former Verſe: And theſe Words, *In which are ſome things hard to be underſtood*, do not mean St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, but the Things here ſpoke of; thoſe Events that are diſcours'd of in the former Part of this Chapter. And in theſe, one great Difficulty was, the Time in which they ſhould be fulfill'd: And whoever conſiders the Things themſelves, will find in them Difficulties enough; eaſily believ'd by a Chriſtian, when founded on God's Authority, and reſolv'd into Omnipotence; but not eaſily accounted for on any other Principles. Theſe the Unſtable and Unlearned wreſt, as they do alſo the other Scriptures, to their own Deſtruction. Both theſe Characters, Unſtable and Unlearned, belong to the ſame Perſons; ſuch as could not be fix'd in any ſerious Conviction; ſuch as had Hearts not diſpos'd to receive the Doctrines of Chriſtianity. Unlearned cannot deſign ſuch as wanted the Advantages of Human Learning; the want of theſe Advantages was no Crime, and therefore would not have been join'd with a Vicious Character.

Beſides, when that Character is mention'd, *Acts* 4. 13. another Word is us'd; not ἀμαθεῖς as here, but ἀγεάμματοι καὶ ἰδιῶται.

Again; We ſhould conſider, St. *Peter* himſelf wanted theſe Advantages, having only the Uſe of Languages by Inſpiration: And that Learning was uſeleſs in theſe Things; the plaineſt Chriſtian being as able to underſtand theſe Promiſes as the moſt Learned, and the moſt Learned as unable to explain the Time and Manner of their Accompliſhment as the plaineſt. For theſe Reaſons, 'tis neceſſary to underſtand by Unlearned, [ἀμαθεῖς] Unteachable, Indiſpos'd to entertain ſuch Important Truths: This agrees with their former Character, Unſtable, and is its Natural Conſequence. From ſuch it might be expected, they would wreſt ſuch Solemn and Awful Scriptures: This they did, by Concluſions that deſtroy'd the Deſign of them; by Impious Preſumptions that there would be no ſuch Things, becauſe they were not yet fulfill'd.

And they wreſted not only ſuch Difficulties, but the other Scriptures alſo: And this can't be ſtrange, ſince all Ages have produc'd ſome Inſtances of ſuch Perverſeneſs. The moſt Expreſs Authorities in Scripture are not always a Sufficient Guard, either to

to the moſt Important Articles of Faith, or to the moſt Neceſſary Moral Duties.

This Perverſeneſs carry'd with it its own Puniſhment; they who thus wreſted the Scriptures, wreſted them to their own Deſtruction. Not that (as this Objection ſuppoſes) they were damn'd for any Simple Errors they run into; but having made a Scoff of the Terrors of the Lord, they reſign'd themſelves to a Reprobate Mind, and a Bruiſh Life.

From this Explication of this Text, it appears,

1. The Apoſtle does not impute Difficulty to the Scriptures in general: He ſpeaks only of ſome Things mention'd by St. *Paul*, as well as in this Chapter; concerning which there is at preſent no Danger of miſtaking, there not being the ſame Expectation concerning 'em that there was in thoſe Days.

2. The Difficulties St. *Peter* ſpeaks of, were in the Nature of the Things themſelves, and more particularly in the Time of their Accompliſhment. So much as St. *Paul* and St. *Peter* were authorized to reveal, was not hard to be underſtood; but what they did not reveal, muſt needs be ſo.

3. As to the Perſons ſpoke of, their Want was not Human Learning, but that *Wiſdom*

that

that comes from above; which is first pure, then peaceable.

4. They are not represented as barely mistaking these Difficult Revelations, but wresting them; that is, distorting them, bringing them by obstinate Force and Violence to their own Vicious Conclusions.

Lastly, If such Persons make the same Use of the other Scriptures likewise, it is not any Thing Extraordinary; nor need any Honest Mind be frighted by their Destruction.

It appears therefore, from the True Sense of every Word of this Text, that it ought not to discourage any in the Serious Use of the Scripture, and consequently, is no Objection against Faith.

The Scriptures, in General, vindicated.

It may likewise be affirm'd of the Scriptures in general, That every Thing Necessary to be believ'd, is express'd plainly. If any Necessary Doctrine is express'd obscurely in one Place, it may be found plain in another. What's beyond our Capacities in the Articles of our Faith, so much is not reveal'd; and what is not reveal'd, we are not concern'd to understand. So far as the most Mysterious Principles are reveal'd, so far they may be easily understood by Common Sense; and beyond that, they are but sophisticated and debas'd by the greatest Subtilty of Learning.

A Man

A Man of an humble and ſincere Mind may fall into Miſtakes in Reading the Scriptures, but hardly miſs ſuch a Faith as will be accepted by God. When we propoſe nothing by Conſulting the Scripture, but to know the Will of God, and the moſt acceptable Manner of performing it; we may ſafely depend on the Aſſiſtance of his Spirit, on the Propriety and Sufficiency of his Inſtructions, on the Unprejudic'd Uſe of our own Reaſon for Neceſſary Knowledge. When Pride and Vanity, when Intereſt and Luſt have poſſeſs'd us with Corrupt Principles, and ſend us to the Scriptures for Arguments to ſupport us; every Thing darkens immediately, the Whole is overſpread with Clouds, and we form them (by our own Vicious Imaginations) into what Shape we pleaſe.

Some Parts of the Scriptures may be loſt to many Readers, how Ingenuous ſoever; they may not be able to underſtand the Doctrine contain'd in them; and they may ſometimes miſtake the Doctrine of one Text for the Doctrine of another: And 'tis poſſible to miſtake Abundance of ſingle Texts, and yet not entertain one wrong Principle in Religion, nor want one Neceſſary or Uſeful Truth. But whatever Miſtakes they may have the Misfortune to fall into, while they enquire after nothing but their Way to Heaven, they muſt be oblig'd (in General)

to

to the moſt devoted Attention to God's Revelations, and a ſuitable Reſignation to what they apprehend to be their Contents; that is, they muſt be oblig'd to Faith. One Man may be more happy than another in apprehending their True Meaning, and conſequently, ſuppoſing the ſame Degree of Faithfulneſs and Application in the Uſe of them, will more fully anſwer God's End in giving them; but that End is not quite defeated in the other, who miſtakes, and therefore loſes ſome Parts of them: And ſo far as he has anſwer'd that End, he ſhall be accepted and rewarded.

As the Scriptures were dictated by the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Heaven, on purpoſe to educate us for that Inheritance which Chriſt purchas'd for us; ſo we may depend on it, they are proper for that Purpoſe for which they were dictated. If we read them with the ſame View with which they were writ, (*i. e.* to *make us wiſe unto Salvation*) we may, with great Comfort, expect to be ſo, tho' not Infallible.

1 Cor. 1. 30. To conclude this Point. *Chriſt Jeſus is our Wiſdom*; but 'tis impoſſible that Wiſdom ſhould be of any Uſe to us without Faith. It is, I think, allow'd on all Hands, that ſuch Ignorance as Men have it not in their Power to avoid, is not culpable, is not to be blam'd: But by this we are only to underſtand, that it is not liable to any poſi-

tive

tive Puniſhments. Notwithſtanding the Truth of this, ſuch Knowledge (as is here imply'd in Wiſdom) is of great Importance, of great Uſe and Advantage to us; it directs us to ſuch Things, as raiſe our Nature in proportion to our Faith. And tho' others may not be made miſerable by their Ignorance or Errors, we may be made continually more happy, by our Knowledge of ſuch Important Truths. The Relation there naturally is between Rational Minds and ſuch Things, will produce this Effect, if not violently prevented by Vicious Habits; and the moſt Innocent Miſtakes about them, tho' not puniſh'd by God, will be thus far miſchievous, that they will be at leaſt ſome Hindrance to the Soul.

And therefore, tho' Chriſtianity is not like Things that may poſſibly be of Uſe in very Skilful Hands, but terrible and deſtructive to thoſe that are not Exact Maſters of that Skill; yet 'tis *the Power of God unto Salvation* only *to them that believe*; and Faith is not only Juſtly, but Graciouſly inſiſted on.

Fundamentals.

The Laſt Thing that ſeems neceſſary to be obſerv'd concerning Faith, is the Diſpute about Fundamentals.

If it be ask'd, as probably it may, What are the Fundamental or Neceſſary Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, without which no

Man (that has the Chriſtian Revelations in his Hand) can be ſav'd? I anſwer, This Queſtion ſeems to me too much like that Queſtion propos'd to our Saviour, *Maſter, Which is the Firſt and Great Commandment?* And it ought to be anſwer'd accordingly, in ſuch Words as comprehend all. Every Chriſtian is oblig'd to believe all the Chriſtian Revelations, as he is oblig'd to practiſe all Chriſtian Duties. And that Rule of St. *James* will hold equally in both, *He that offends,* (that is, wilfully and habitually) *in one Point, is guilty of all.* As the ſame Authority has eſtabliſh'd all Matters of Practice, ſo the ſame Veracity has confirm'd all the Subjects of Faith; and we muſt, in both, endeavour to underſtand all the Dictates of the Spirit, and be ſincerely determin'd by them.

To be more particular upon ſuch a Queſtion, would be no better an Employment than that Author choſe, who ſome Years ſince writ a Book *de Minimo Vitæ*, concerning the leaſt Degree of Life; enquiring what Parts of the Body might be ſpar'd; how far a Man might be epitomiz'd, and yet live?

One Article of Faith, as to its Contents and Influence, may be of more Importance than another; but they are all Important. And the Belief of all may be ſaid (in General) to be Neceſſary, as well as the Obſervance

vance of all Practical Precepts. We may miſtake both; and our Miſtakes may be Innocent or Criminal, according to their Cauſes: And the Conſequence of our Miſtakes will be of greater or of leſs Moment, according to the Nature of their Subjects.

Every Thing that's worthy of a Place among Divine Revelations, has certainly in it ſome Uſeful Meaning; and when we miſtake that Meaning, we loſe ſo much of the Advantage that God deſign'd us by theſe his Revelations. This is a good Reaſon, why *we ſhould give all diligence*, to underſtand *every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*. But ſure no Man explicitly believes every Truth contain'd in the Scriptures, or deducible from them, no more than he conſtantly obſerves every Duty.

Where, after a reaſonable Concern to diſcover and obey the Truth, we conclude wrong; tho' we muſt ſuffer as to the Improvement of our Souls, yet it will not be imputed to us as an Inexcuſable Defect in our Faith.

Laſtly, When this Queſtion is propos'd concerning Particular Perſons, or in order to a Perſonal Application; the true Anſwer ſeems to be, That 'tis a Vicious Curioſity, and not only ſo, but incapable of Satisfaction from any Human Mouth. God alone

can determine what Crime there is in any Degrees of Unbelief, becauſe he alone can ſee what Cauſes they proceed from. 'Tis (in general) neceſſary to keep our Faith entire; 'tis both our Intereſt, and our Duty. But for any Man to take upon him to determine what each Single Perſon muſt believe, or elſe be damn'd, is ſurely too much like Uſurping upon the Great Judge of the World. Even a more General Diſtinction of what's Neceſſary, and what's Diſpenſible, ſeems ſuch a Delineation of the Confines between Heaven and Hell, as is not to be expected from any Human Hand.

As the Revelation of the Leaſt Divine Truth is a Signal Bleſſing; he that ſlights it, is in great Danger from his Inſolence and Ingratitude.

Creeds juſtify'd.

From hence, therefore, I ſhall conclude this Chapter with Two Obſervations concerning Creeds, againſt which ſome Men are ſo forward to expreſs their Indignation.

Firſt, As Judicious Collections of the moſt Important Points of Revelation, they are very Proper Aſſiſtances for all Chriſtians: Even they, who think themſelves above being dictated to, may make uſe of them as Heads of Recollection, or farther Enquiry; and others of more moderate Capacities, may uſe them as the Safeſt Rules or Principles they can collect. And beſides theſe Uſes, they ſerve all as a Common Form

Form of Profeſſion in their Publick Service; and more particularly, they ſerve as a Guard to the Chriſtian Society, that Wolves may not be impos'd on them inſtead of Shepherds. Other Uſes they may likewiſe ſerve; but if the firſt of theſe only be allow'd, that's ſufficient to ſupport them.

Secondly, What is uſually inſiſted on as moſt provoking, is, their being declar'd Neceſſary to Salvation. Now, whatever might poſſibly be the Intention of an Immediate Compiler, no hard Senſe ought to be fix'd upon his Words, that does not inſeparably belong to 'em. But when the Form it ſelf is made a Publick Act of the Church, 'tis highly reaſonable to interpret it in ſuch a Manner, as to leave her conſiſtent with her ſelf. Since therefore ſhe declares Baptiſm it ſelf only Generally Neceſſary to Salvation, charitably leaving Room for Particular Caſes, ſuch as may be reaſonably excepted; ſhe ought to be underſtood in the ſame Senſe, when ſhe pronounces the ſame Neceſſity, tho' on another Subject. And this Senſe, I am ſure, ought to be Inoffenſive; or elſe the Subject Matter of our Creeds ought to be prov'd not Chriſtian Truths.

CHAP. XI.

Concerning the Chriſtian Sacraments, and Publick Worſhip in general.

THE Two Sacraments, Baptiſm and the Euchariſt, are Poſitive External Inſtitutions, and were originally ordain'd as Publick Adminiſtrations; and their Uſefulneſs muſt turn upon the ſame Principles with all Publick Worſhip. It may therefore be neceſſary to fix the Uſefulneſs and Obligation of Publick Worſhip in general; and then, what is Peculiar to the Sacraments, may be diſtinctly view'd in a ſmall Compaſs.

External Worſhip. As our Nature conſiſts of Two very different Parts, (a Material, Corruptible Frame, with various Affections depending on it; and an Immaterial, Immortal Spirit, the Proper Subject of Faith and Reaſon;) ſo muſt our Duty.

From hence ariſes that Great Diſtinction in Religion, External, and Internal Sanctity: Such External Devotions, as we conclude

clude from Reaſon and Revelation acceptable to God, and from Experience uſeful to our ſelves; and ſuch Internal Diſpoſitions of Soul, as are neceſſary to the Perfection of our Nature, and agreeable to our Obligations to God.

Chriſt did not diſcourage the Rites and Conſtitutions of the Temple: He join'd in them himſelf, as long as he continued upon Earth; but he foretold the Repeal of them, and deſign'd a more Perfect Scheme. This Scheme, therefore, which he deſign'd, muſt be ſuppos'd Uſeful to Mankind: They are not to diſparage it, as beneath the Excellency of Chriſtianity: They are to conſider all Parts of it, as directed to a Spiritual End; and, with that Direction, fulfilling the Purpoſe of the Goſpel, purifying to Chriſt a *peculiar People*, *zealous of good Works*. This will be the gradual Effect of it, if ſeriouſly and faithfully perform'd. All Ends are more Valuable in themſelves than the Means that lead to them; but the more Valuable the End it ſelf is, the more Valuable are the Means for the Sake of it.

The Conformity of the Soul to God, is doubtleſs the Indiſpenſible Duty of all Mankind, and the Sum Total of all Religion, and of Chriſtianity eſpecially: But an Exceſs of Zeal, and (the Natural Conſequence of that) a Defect of Judgment, have concluded from hence an Unhappy Error; a

Preſumption upon the Excellence of Spiritual Perfection, to the Prejudice, and ſometimes to the Entire Neglect of External Devotions: A Piety, that may deſerve Compaſſion; that may be conſider'd with the ſame Tenderneſs, with which we reflect on a Fine Genius overſtrain'd to Diſtraction. But when Perſons can't think themſelves Enough Chriſtians, without being more than Men; when they think External Ordinances too mean for their Accompliſhments in Religion; when they can't be contented to converſe with God by ſuch Mediums as Human Infirmities require; when they ſuppoſe an Unintelligible Union with him, and Immediate Communications with Heaven; they prevent the Improvements they might make, by aſpiring to Impracticable Perfections.

A Man ought not to think himſelf above any Thing that's human: As our Lungs may be ſuffocated by too groſs an Air, ſo would they likewiſe be incapable of preſerving Life in one too much rarify'd. Tho' our Bodies will be glorified in Heaven, 'tis not probable that our Piety there will be entirely abſtracted. But to be ſure, while we continue upon Earth, in theſe weak and corruptible Bodies, we ſhall always find ſuch Ordinances neceſſary, as are proper to influence their Affections.

And

And what could be more proper for that End, than the Two Chriſtian Sacraments? Baptiſm is, indeed, ſolemniz'd but Once to each Single Chriſtian; but the Solemnizing it to others in the Chriſtian Society, repeats in their Minds the Endearments and Obligations imply'd in it. And the Lord's Supper cannot be too often repeated, conſiſtent with Reverence and Devotion; and that is the moſt paſſionate Application that can be made.

Publick Worſhip.

As to Publick Worſhip in general, 'tis notorious in Fact, All Nations (whether they acknowledg'd but One, or more Divine Powers) have always maintain'd it throughout all Ages. If ſome Particular Perſons, as Unnatural Productions, have appear'd againſt it, this makes it no more Uncertain, than ſuch Productions make Human Shape.

When the World was generally perverted to Idolatry, God choſe *Abraham* as a Confeſſor and Patron of his Honour, and in him laid the Foundation of a Royal Prieſthood, an Holy Nation, a Peculiar People. The whole Prophecy of *Malachi* reproaches the Corruptions of that People in their Publick Worſhip, and foretels the Removal of their Service, its being ſupply'd by the Ordinances of the Goſpel. God declares, He *will not accept their Offering*; his *Name ſhall*

be Great among the Gentiles: A pure Offering ſhall be offer'd to his Name. The Lord ſhall ſuddenly come to his Temple; he ſhall be like a Refiner's Fire: He ſhall purify the Sons of Levi; he ſhall purge them as Gold and Silver, that they may offer to the Lord an Offering in Righteouſneſs. Here, not only the Being, but the Improvement of Publick Worſhip under the Goſpel, is plainly declar'd. Accordingly, 'tis ſaid, *The true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth.* If this Declaration of Chriſt's can appear to any one to mean the Abrogation of all External Worſhip, let him conſider the Practice of Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

John 4. 23.

The Inſtitution of Two Solemnities for the Uſe of the Chriſtian Church, which are uſually call'd the Sacraments, this implies and requires the Continuance of Publick Worſhip: They are both Solemn Acts in it; and the Lord's Supper does (in its Nature) ſuppoſe Society. And what Chriſt ſays, *Where two or three are gather'd together in my Name, there am I in the midſt of them*; implies other Publick, or Common Devotions. And *Paul* and *Barnabas* are ſaid to *aſſemble themſelves with the Church at Antioch a whole Year.* But that Hiſtory abounds with Inſtances.

Matt. 18. 19.

Acts 11.

The Epiſtles are generally written to the reſpective Parties, as Churches; as Societies

of Chriſtians, uniting in the Chriſtian Worſhip as well as Faith. And, from the ſeveral Precepts relating to their Publick Congregations, and the great Number of Texts that either mention or ſuppoſe them; there can remain no doubt, but that Publick Worſhip was continu'd in the Chriſtian Church; and the Common Faith of Hiſtory obliges us to conclude it continued ever ſince.

Religious Worſhip, in General, may be apprehended as the Converſation of Creatures with their God: And therefore, Publick Worſhip can have nothing peculiar in it, but what is imply'd in the Notice and Share which Men mutually take in this Converſation, and the Influence proceeding from thence.

To this, St. *Paul* imputes Salvation, that is, Eternal Happineſs. As this Happineſs is the *Gift of God*, the Performance of our Duty may be conſider'd as the Condition of receiving it. We may ſay, without further Enquiry, that God's Inſiſting on it, has made it Neceſſary: Tho' we could ſee no good Reaſon why God ſhould inſiſt on it, yet his having done it, ſhould determine us to perform it, as a Neceſſary Means to that End, with an Implicit Submiſſion. Rom. 10. 10.

But, as 'tis certain God does not require it without ſome good Reaſon, founded in the Nature of Things; that he does not inſiſt on Impertinent Conditions of Salvation;

tion; ſo 'tis the proper Buſineſs of Mankind, to conſider that Reaſon, and the Natural Tendency of ſuch Conditions as God inſiſts on, as far as their own Capacities, and the Revelations of God will lead them.

Having fix'd in our Minds the Neceſſity of Religious Worſhip, as inſiſted on by the Authority of God, as a ſure Refuge under any Difficulties that may poſſibly perplex us; we may then proceed to conſider its Nature, the Influence which it naturally hath.

The Promiſes of God, and Suitable Diſpoſitions in the Minds of Men, are always to be underſtood as inſeparably united, tho' not always diſtinctly expreſs'd. If therefore ſuch Worſhip forms in our Minds ſuch Diſpoſitions; Eternal Happineſs may very properly be conſider'd as the Effect of it in this way, concurrent with God's Promiſes.

God's Glory. The Univerſal End of Worſhip is what's generally call'd God's Glory: The Nature of this Glory (in it ſelf) has not been ſo much miſtaken, as the End to which it ſerves. 'Tis plain, from the Words us'd in Scripture for Glory, and Glorifying, it conſiſts in the Sentiments rais'd of God in the Minds of his Creatures.

The Difference, therefore, between Publick and Private Worſhip muſt be this; the Pri-

Private raiſes theſe Sentiments only in Single Perſons; Retir'd Votaries can only be affected with their own Thoughts; the Publick communicates theſe Sentiments, and theſe Thoughts, as by one Common Soul.

The Uſe of this Glory is not any Thing that terminates in God; its True End is the Influence it naturally has on the Minds of his Creatures. For this Reaſon, they who obſerv'd the moſt Pompous and moſt Expenſive Parts of God's Worſhip, and yet were Strangers to this Influence, and continued unrighteous, ſuch are ſaid in Scripture to offer up *the Sacrifice of Fools*: They act irrationally; they ſuppoſe God pleas'd with Uſeleſs Devotions. This is St. *Paul's Form of Godlineſs*, without its *Power*: 'Tis framing Unnatural Notions of the Deity, and of Human Happineſs too.

The Means by which Worſhip influences our Minds, is by imprinting on them the Characters of God's Attributes; whether conſider'd abſolutely, in their own Eternal Perfection, or relatively, as our own Life and Conduct is affected by them.

The Angels are not in a State of Probation as Men are, and therefore they are not engag'd in any Poſitive Conditions for their Future Happineſs; and yet they worſhip, or glorify God in the moſt perfect Manner.

We

Effects of Publick Worſhip.

We may, therefore, reaſonably expect great Effects from the Serious and Judicious Performance of this Duty: Both the Object of it, that Glorious Being to whom we pay it, and the Subject of it likewiſe, the Things in which 'tis converſant, are in themſelves of ſuch Importance, their Influence muſt be ſtrong on all ſincere, attentive Minds.

From its Object.

The Object is a Being eternally poſſeſs'd of all poſſible Perfections; and the Great End of that Worſhip we pay him, is to eſtabliſh a due Senſe of thoſe Perfections in our Minds.

Theſe Perfections ſhame every Thing that's Evil, and recommend every Thing that's Good: They make us ſenſible, that Virtues and Vices are ſo many reſpective Steps to Happineſs and Miſery: As they ſhow us, that this Being is Maſter of all that's Good, and accordingly compleatly Happy; and on the other hand, unſtain'd by any Thing that's Evil, and accordingly free from all Degrees of Miſery.

Another great Advantage we receive from Converſing with God in the Solemn Ordinances of Religion, is, keeping up in the Soul a conſtant Senſe of his Preſence with us. The Perfections of his Nature place it beyond queſtion, that God conſtantly obſerves our moſt private Conduct; that he ſees diſtinctly all the moſt private Actions of

of our Lives, all the moſt retir'd Thoughts of our Hearts. Our Conviction of this, that God conſtantly obſerves us, and is a *God of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, will (probably) engage us in a Conſcientious Integrity; in a due Guard upon all Parts of Life, and a Religious Concern not to diſpleaſe him. If it be allow'd good Advice, to imagine the Preſence of ſome Virtuous Friend, in order to check any irregular Inclinations; how powerful muſt this Conviction of the Real Preſence of God be, to ſuppreſs the firſt Motions of Vice, and make us truly ſorry for all paſt Acts of Rebellion? There's ſomething in Human Nature, that's very hard to be quite ſuppreſs'd, and can't be reconcil'd to apparent Baſeneſs. The Sight of a Friend, to whom we have been ungrateful, will give us ſome Uneaſineſs; how much more may be expected from the Preſence of the Almighty, when we have been ſo to him? That Preſence we are always in, but don't always conſider it. Solemn Applications to him make us more immediately ſenſible of that Preſence, and leave ſuch Impreſſions as (if duly repeated) will keep us from forgetting it at other Times.

From its Subjects.

And as Religious Worſhip has in general ſuch Influence from the Nature of its Object; inviting us to Imitation in order to Happineſs, and guarding the Soul with a juſt

juſt Senſe of the Preſence and Obſervation of ſuch an Awful Majeſty, to whom all Earthly Princes are leſs than Children; ſo the ſeveral Parts likewiſe of Publick Worſhip, particularly the Chriſtian, are in their Nature apt to raiſe ſuch Reflections as improve the Mind. Among theſe, we may reckon Adoration the chief, and moſt eminently religious. Adoration conſiders the Natural Perfections of the Being to whom 'tis paid, and expreſſes an humble Admiration. All thoſe Parts of our Devotions are to be referr'd to this, in which we have no particular Concern for our ſelves, in which we adore the Glories of God's Nature for their own Sakes, their own Excellence, Majeſty, and perfect Lovelineſs. In ſuch an Employment, if our Minds are at all concern'd, if we do not join as groſs Hypocrites, and have taught our Bodies to act their Part without engaging the Soul, we muſt raiſe an affectionate Eſteem for thoſe Perfections, and reflect upon any Vices in our ſelves with Shame and Confuſion of Face. The Imperfections of our Nature it ſelf may juſtly humble us, when brought into ſuch a Compariſon; but groſs Abuſes of ſuch an imperfect Nature muſt be highly offenſive to us; they muſt be ſo many Heads of Self-Condemnation.

Adoration.

When a Man, for Inſtance, has been proſtrate before the Majeſty of Heaven, declaring

ring a moſt ſubmiſſive Reverence, when he has been raiſing in his Soul an awful Devotion from the Grandeur of Omnipotence; with what Decency, with what Satisfaction to his own Mind, can he return to the Impertinence of Pride? The Abſurdity of it muſt be ſo ſtrong upon his Conſcience, he muſt be ſo ſenſible it don't become him, that mere Shame may prevail with him to renounce it. A Mind juſt return'd from contemplating and adoring Perfections infinitely above it ſelf, will naturally check ſuch groſs Indecencies.

In the ſame manner, when ſuch a Perſon has been celebrating that Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, with which God's Incontrollable Power is exercis'd in the World, diſtributing to all Parts of it all that may reaſonably be expected; when he has expreſs'd his devout Applauſes on ſuch Exact and Regular Conduct, perfectly free from all Abuſes of Power, tho' ſubject to no Reſtraint but the Goodneſs of ſuch Diſtributions; 'tis ſure not eaſy for ſuch a Perſon, in his low Capacity, to act otherwiſe; to oppreſs his Brethren, to defraud his Neighbours; to diſcompoſe, as far as in him lies, that beautiful Order of the Univerſe, for which he has been adoring God; to act ſo unlike that God, whom he has been adoring for the contrary; to imitate the Conduct of the

the Devil, a Nature the moſt oppoſite to that Lovely Object of his Worſhip.

The ſame may be obſerv'd on every Part of God's Nature, as 'tis inſiſted on in our Religious Adoration. Such Services as theſe, and avow'd Irregularities in our Lives, are ſo many Contradictions and Inconſiſtencies. Some Struggle may be kept up for ſome Time; but either the one or the other will prevail, will eſtabliſh its Dominion, and govern the whole Man. This Influence, from the Expreſſion of our Solemn Praiſes of God, is not eaſily eſcap'd; a ſmall Degree of Attention will make theſe Concluſions.

But, probably, ſuch Parts of our Worſhip as immediately regard our ſelves, may more effectually command Attention, and ſhow us our Obligations more diſtinctly. As our Worſhip is founded on the Relation we have to that perfect Nature, whatever Order, whatever Form 'tis expreſs'd in, the Subſtance of it muſt conſiſt of ſuch Particulars as theſe; Thankſgiving for the Mercies we have receiv'd from him, Confeſſion of our Ingratitude in the ſeveral Tranſgreſſions of our Lives, and Supplications for ſuch future Mercies as our Happineſs depends on; ſuch as Forgiveneſs of thoſe Tranſgreſſions, and ſuch future Favours as our Nature ſtands in need of.

Thankſ-

Thankſgiving, whatever the Subject be, is attended with proportionable Endearments of Gratitude: And the Force of ſuch Endearments, when preſs'd upon the Mind in one Entire, Univerſal View, is hardly reſiſtible: 'Twill put a Man on ſaying in his Heart, the next Time he is tempted to Sin, *How can I do this Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt* ſuch a *God?* *Thankſgiving.*

This is a Queſtion hardly to be eſcap'd, and not to be anſwer'd with any Thing, but an immediate Reſolution at leaſt to fly from the Temptation. And as Thankſgivings in general recommend all Branches of our Duty, both with reſpect to God's Authority in Point of Gratitude, and with reſpect to his Goodneſs, convincing us, that He to whom we own our ſelves ſo much indebted, could never give us ſuch Laws as hinder us from enjoying the Bleſſings we praiſe him for; it ſhews us, that we are as much oblig'd to God while we are paying Obedience to his Laws, as while we are gathering Providential Bleſſings, ſhower'd down like Manna from his Throne. As the Conviction of God's Goodneſs, imprinted on our Souls by our Thankſgivings, recommends his Laws as the wiſe Directions of an indulgent Father; ſo the particular Subjects of a Chriſtian's Thankſgivings do much ſtrengthen this Principle. They ſhew, that Piety and Virtue are the great

Care of Heaven, and the great Buſineſs of his Life : For, if ſuch Important Means have been us'd for his Redemption, his Reconciliation to God, his Deliverance from the deſtructive Conſequences of the Corruptions of his Nature ; if God has been pleas'd to depute his Bleſſed Spirit to aſſiſt him, to enlighten his Underſtanding, and guard his Will ; to clear the Evidence for Truth, and obviate the Impoſtures of the Father of Lies ; if *Life and Immortality are brought to light thro' the Goſpel*, the Grand Conſequence of his Conduct diſtinctly diſcover'd, and the other World diſclos'd in both its oppoſite Extremes, Exquiſite Happineſs and Miſery : If he can ſeriouſly declare his Obligations and Gratitude to God for ſuch Bleſſings as theſe ; what ſtrong Repreſentations muſt be made of the Amiableneſs of Virtue, and the Odiouſneſs of Vice !

Confeſſion. Another Important Part of our Publick Service, is, the Confeſſion of our Ingratitude in the ſeveral Tranſgreſſions of our Lives. If we proceed in the accidental Courſe of ſuch Ends and Means as offer themſelves in Life, without any ſerious Reflections, any ſolemn Recollection, we may probably overwhelm our Souls with Vices and Follies ; we may forget there is a God in the World, to whom we muſt give an exact

exact Account, tho' we take ſo little of our ſelves. But if we have Solemn Seaſons of preſenting our ſelves before God, and imploring Pardon for ſuch Misbehaviour as we have been perſuaded to; if ſuch Seaſons return at proper Diſtances, and repeat their Importunity in Oppoſition to ſuch Perſuaſions; we ſhall certainly improve by them, in proportion to the Attention we allow them. The moſt innocent, the moſt invincible Infirmities, will be look'd on as the Misfortunes of our preſent State: And all groſs Corruptions will lye heavy on our Souls; they'll diſquiet them ſo much, we ſhall not be at reſt till we have remov'd them.

Supplication.

The Laſt Head, under which our Publick Devotions are to be conſider'd, is, Supplications for all ſuch future Mercies as our Happineſs depends on; ſuch as the Forgiveneſs of the Sins we have been confeſſing and lamenting; and the Continuance of God's Favour, thro' all the Variety of his Goodneſs and our Wants.

'Tis hardly poſſible for a ſerious Mind to implore God's Pardon for paſt Tranſgreſſions, and not be affected with ſome Concern, ſome Reſolutions not to repeat them. Beſide the Natural Influence which ſuch an Application will be apt to have on any reaſonable Man, the Abſurdity of expecting

to prevail on God for ſuch Pardon without ſuch a Diſpoſition, would ſtifle ſuch Petitions before they were half form'd in the Heart. God has encourag'd us to apply to the Throne of Grace, that Deſpair might not prevent a Reformation; but he has declar'd the Deſign of this Goodneſs as plainly as the Goodneſs it ſelf; it is to *lead us to Repentance.* And the ſame Abſurdity will purſue our Prayers for all other the moſt Neceſſary Mercies. All ſuch Applications ſuppoſe God's particular Providence; and all the Favours diſpens'd by God's particular Providence muſt be ſuppos'd, in ſuch wiſe Hands, to ſupport the General Deſign of his Creation, to contribute to the Univerſal Succeſs of it: And that Succeſs cannot be ſuppos'd conſiſtent with Diſobedience to his Laws. Our Addreſſes, therefore, for Providential Mercies, very plainly ſuppoſe a dutiful Behaviour: Our Sins, we muſt know, ſeparate between us and our God. He knows perfectly what Gifts are good, and what are not; and it is not poſſible to engage him to humour us in our miſchievous Requeſts.

Objection anſwer'd. Such is the Influence of the Chriſtian Worſhip thro' all its Parts. But if it be objected to this, That we find in Fact very little of it among Chriſtians; that the Worſhip it ſelf ſeems to be perform'd as their whole

whole Duty, without any Laſting Influence on their Minds; it muſt be anſwer'd, How much Truth ſoever there may be in this, the Reproach muſt reſt upon ſuch careleſs Profeſſors: Neither the Chriſtian Faith, nor the Chriſtian Worſhip, can reaſonably be arraign'd for it. If we ſhut up our Hearts againſt them, all Parts of Religion muſt be uſeleſs. But the Principles of the Chriſtian Worſhip, if ſuppos'd at the Time to be true, and ſuch Worſhip be not void both of Spirit and Underſtanding; theſe will *draw us with the Cords of a Man* to Piety and Virtue, and by them to Heaven. They will prevail on us by a Rational and Natural Influence, to perform the Duties of this Life, in order to the Happineſs of the other. And they will likewiſe be attended with ſome Influence Supernatural: This Converſation with God will, if duly conducted, be bleſs'd by him; a Being ſo Perfect, and ſo graciouſly inclin'd to communicate his Perfections, with proportionable Aſſiſtances of his Spirit.

Upon the firſt View of this Part of Chriſtianity, a Man would be apt to apprehend Objections from the Deficiency of External Inſtitutions, rather than from the Inſtitution of Two Sacraments. Since the Influence of Publick Worſhip is ſuch, Offences might rather be expected from the Scriptures being ſo ſhort in Proviſions of this *Objection;*

Anſwer'd. Kind: But, after the moſt Vital Parts were provided for, it ſeems to be preſum'd, we might be truſted with the reſt. And theſe Conſiderations may give Satisfaction, where ſuch Offences ariſe.

Some Directions in Scripture. First, The Scripture does not leave us altogether without Direction in this Point: God is declar'd *a God of Order, and not of Confuſion*; and the Churches of the Saints are particularly referr'd to. Accordingly, we find a Regular Exerciſe of Authority in the Council of *Jeruſalem*; and Epiſtles written by St. *Paul* to Two Chriſtian Biſhops, *Timothy* of *Epheſus*, and *Titus* of *Crete*.

The Prim. State of the Church did not admit more. Secondly, The State of the Chriſtian Church was ſuch, for ſome Centuries, as not to admit One Common, Publick Proviſion for the Chriſtian Worſhip. It was the Object of great Indignation, and ſuffer'd many grievous Perſecutions from the Powers of the World, before they could be converted.

A more particular Proviſion obvious afterwards. Thirdly, When the Legiſlative became Chriſtian, when the Diſtinction between Church and State, like that between Soul and Body, became rather Rational than Senſible; when Chriſtians and Subjects made One Society, as Soul and Body make One Perſon; it was then very obvious for the Social Power, where-ever plac'd, to conſi-

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der it as one great Part of its Duty, to provide for the Chriſtian Worſhip.

The Chriſtian Religion was calculated for Univerſality, and tho' the Inheritance and Poſſeſſion of the Son of God be far from being yet compleat; he has long poſſeſs'd ſo much of the Earth, that all Chriſtians have not been contain'd under the ſame Social Power, but by diſtinct Governments have made diſtinct Nations, and (in a Religious Reſpect) externally diſtinct Churches; all under Chriſt, their Spiritual Head, and (in that Reſpect) One Church. The Authority, therefore, in the ſeveral Parts of this Church, ſhould make ſuch Proviſion for the Chriſtian Worſhip, as not to obſtruct it, not to make Univerſal Communication in it impracticable. This they will do, if they mix any Thing unlawful in their Worſhip. As for different Methods of diſpoſing and expreſſing the ſame Lawful Things, theſe will be no Hindrance: Nor will any Innocent Ceremonies; for theſe are but another Kind of Language, only Real Characters.

And if this Obligation runs thro' the whole Body, the Legiſlative in each Nation ſhould provide for it with the ſame Care, in regard to their own Members. Some Proper Proviſion ſhould be made for the Regular Conduct of the Spiritual Life, as well

well as of the Natural; and it ſhould be protected, as far as it depends on External Action, at leaſt from Indigence and Confuſion: I ſay, at leaſt ſo far; becauſe I think a Publick Proviſion may be uſefully carry'd much farther, by proper Inſtructions and Exhortations.

When made, all are oblig'd by it.

And if this be incumbent on the Social Power, the Subjects of that Power muſt (from the Neceſſity of Publick Worſhip) make uſe of the Proviſion made for them. Some Obligation to obſerve ſome Common Rule muſt be allow'd; otherwiſe, as I ſhall ſhew preſently, there could probably be no Publick Worſhip at all. And by their Relation in that Society, they are oblig'd to obſerve that Rule which is eſtabliſh'd by the Social Power in it; providing they have no juſt Exception ariſing from the Nature of Things, which is to be conſider'd as a prior Obligation.

Were there not ſome Principle which muſt over-rule in Things Indifferent, all Diſtinct Nations (tho' Chriſtians) might divide incommunicably, which muſt ſo far deſtroy Publick Worſhip: And all Single Congregations, in the ſame Nation, might divide from each other in the ſame manner: And 'tis hardly to be avoided long, but that every Single Congregation might ſubdivide too, till there were not left Perſons enough together to make their Worſhip Publick.

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The Members of a Single Congregation, tho' entirely Voluntary, can hardly be ſuppos'd perfectly Unanimous in Perſons and Things long together; but they are bound in Conſcience (in their own way) to diſpenſe with what they may imagine they could mend, for the Sake of Society, *i. e.* in this Caſe, for the Sake of Publick Worſhip.

If it be ſaid, They do in Fact ſubſiſt; this rather confirms, than weakens the Evidence for ſuch a Principle. For, 'tis probable, ſince they can go no lower, they ſee the Neceſſity, and conſequently the Obligation of ſubmitting to ſome Things Indifferent in themſelves; which they may wiſh otherwiſe, and would alter, had they the new-modelling of their Little Conſtitution. When a Man has brought himſelf into viſible Danger of Death by being irregular, when he ſees he muſt either be regular or dye, he will at laſt be regular.

Laſtly, Such a Proviſion is both Practicable and Lawful; it may be made, and without any Violence either to the Civil or Religious Rights of Mankind.

Such Proviſion Lawful and Practicable.

On the one hand, it is allow'd, 1. That Independent Men entering into Society, could convey no more Power than they had themſelves; and that therefore, ſince they had it not in their Power to affect the Sal-

Salvation either of themſelves or others, by any Means but thoſe God had eſtabliſh'd, no Delegated Power can do it. 2. Since when Independent they had not Power, but were forbid by the Law of Nature to profeſs what they did not believe, or to impoſe ſuch Hypocriſy on others; they could not give ſuch a Power to their Magiſtrates. 3. As they had no Right, but were forbid by Natural Conſcience, to offer up to God any Worſhip which they thought unacceptable to him; ſo neither can any Delegated Power oblige to it. 4. As no Single Man had any Natural Right to inflict Grievances on others for not Conſenting to ſuch Inſincere Profeſſion, or ſuch Unacceptable Worſhip; ſo neither can the Collective Rights of Supreme Magiſtrates, as deriv'd from ſuch Men, inflict ſuch Grievances.

But then, on the other hand, 1. As Men had a Natural Right (without injuring others) to make what Proviſion they could for the Convenience of all Parts of Life, ſo they might delegate this Power. 2. As each Man has naturally not only a Right, but ſome Obligation too, to aſſiſt others in the Important Concerns of Religion; ſo they might convey to their Magiſtrates the Care of ſuch Aſſiſtance. 3. This Care, if prudently and faithfully conducted, will

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ſoon produce ſome Regular Eſtabliſhment, and aſſign proper Officers to adminiſter both in Worſhip and Doctrine, according to the General Principles of that Society. 4. In this Eſtabliſhment, it muſt be Lawful to inſiſt on ſome General Propoſitions allow'd to be their Principles, which ſuch Officers ſhould be requir'd to conſent to, as a Proof that they'd anſwer the End for which they were aſſign'd. 5. As Independent Men have naturally a Right to join with what Number they happen to agree in, for the Exerciſe of Publick Worſhip, they may refer it to the Social Power, to provide for that Worſhip in the moſt advantageous Manner. Laſtly, Tho' it may not be poſſible to concur in this Affair even with the Conſciences of all, yet 'tis eaſy to give Satisfaction to the Generality; at leaſt, with ſuch Alterations as Experience may dictate: And they who perſiſt in Oppoſition to it, may, and ſhould be referr'd to their Natural Liberty. *Eaſy too.*

Humour is always moſt out of Seaſon in the moſt Serious Things; but if it prevails with Conſcience to ſecond it, it muſt proceed: And therefore, the Power that eſtabliſhes ſuch a Rule, ſhould not enforce it by Violence. No particular Member of Society ought to be abus'd, much leſs murder'd, becauſe he has at preſent a Diſeaſe. Charity may adminiſter proper Remedies; but *Cautions in it.*

but 'tis downright Cruelty, to impoſe Poyſon as ſuch, tho' Poyſon to him only, and wholſome Nouriſhment to others. As Self-Supremacy tends to deſtroy all Publick Worſhip in one Extreme, ſo Tyranny will deſtroy the End of it in the other.

Concluſion. From the whole therefore, I conclude, That the Scriptures having not provided more particularly for our Publick Worſhip, is no more an Objection againſt them, than it is againſt Natural Providence that we don't bring with us into the World Cloaths and Victuals: Becauſe the Original Conſtitution of Social Power, being deſign'd to provide for all the Uſes of Life, included Religion, as far as it depended on Human Prudence: And, with the Directions which the Scriptures give us, this Proviſion in Chriſtian Societies is made obvious.

Many of thoſe who diſclaim this Proviſion, diſclaim the Sacraments alſo: But theſe have been anſwer'd in the General Vindication of External Worſhip. But as the Devotions attending the Two Chriſtian Sacraments, are the moſt Solemn and moſt Affectionate Parts of the Chriſtian Worſhip; and as they are more particularly ordain'd and inſiſted on by Chriſt himſelf, they ſhould be carefully conſider'd.

Sacraments. Sacraments are the moſt Important Things in which we can be concern'd in this

this World; and yet, notwithſtanding their Importance, they have been very much miſtaken, miſrepreſented and perverted. Sometimes too much, ſometimes too little Reverence is paid them: Sometimes they are look'd on as empty Ceremonies, as dead Letters; and ſometimes they are repreſented as Almighty, as ſufficient of themſelves (without our Aſſiſtance) to ſanctify and preſerve us, as Omnipotence it ſelf was at firſt to create us.

The Nature of Sacraments, their conſiſting of Two very different Things; the one the Object of our Senſes, the other the Object only of our Faith; this is the Occaſion of ſuch different Apprehenſions. Men have not ſufficiently diſtinguiſh'd the Bounds of each; they have not attributed to each its proper Virtue.

'Tis allow'd, this Name is not found in Scripture; but the Things themſelves are plainly inſtituted in it. The Nature of a Sacrament in general muſt be remember'd, as a Rule to direct us in each Particular: And in Explaining this, I ſhall take my Direction from our own Church; ſhe being evidently moſt happy, in joining a free Uſe of Reaſon with an entire Submiſſion to Divine Authority.

A Sacrament in general.

She tells us, "A Sacrament is an Out-
"ward and Viſible Sign of an Inward and
"Spiritual Grace; given unto us, ordain'd
"by

" by Chriſt himſelf, as a Means whereby
" we receive the ſame, and a Pledge to aſ-
" ſure us thereof.

'Twill be ſufficient to make a few Obſervations on theſe Words themſelves, and then on the Subject of them.

Grace, as 'tis us'd here, ſignifies in General, ſome Spiritual Favour. This Favour is ſaid to be given us; and the Sign of it is ſaid to be ordain'd by Chriſt himſelf, as a Means whereby we receive that Favour.

Obſerv. 1. From hence it appears, a Sacrament is not ſuppos'd (in its moſt Eſſential Part) an Application made by Men to God, but one made by God to Men. 'Tis not, in its Eſſential and Primary Deſign, a Service whereby Men propitiate God: 'Tis a gracious Condeſcenſion of God's, by which he converſes with Men, and exhibits to them Spiritual Bleſſings, in order to affect their Souls in ſuch a manner, as to promote the End of their Creation. God being a Pure Spirit, Inviſible in his Nature, and not diſcern'd himſelf by any of our Senſes; Sacraments are Signs of what can't be ſeen, ſenſible Mediums appointed by him to repreſent Spiritual Bleſſings. God's Part is indeed the whole that is ſtrictly and properly Sacramental: The Outward and Viſible Signs exhibited, are in Effect the Voice of God, repeating his Promiſe of that Inward

ward and Spiritual Favour. By theſe Signs, we know 'tis promis'd as certainly, as if that Promiſe were expreſs'd in Words. Theſe Signs, therefore, are to be receiv'd as from the Hand of God; and they are ſuch as by his Inſtitution, as well as in their own Nature as Signs, are Means of our receiving that Spiritual Favour; being requir'd by God as Conditions, and proper in themſelves, to diſpoſe and qualify our Minds for it; according to that Concurrence of the Authority of God, and the Nature of Things, which I have before obſerv'd, and which ſhould always be obſerv'd throughout all God's Diſpenſations.

According to the Nature of the Spiritual Favour repreſented, our Minds ought to be affected: And herein conſiſts Man's Part; a moſt Hearty Reverence and Gratitude, an Affectionate Love and Devotion. We muſt, therefore, carefully diſtinguiſh between the Sacrament it ſelf, and the Devotions that attend it. The Sacrament is the Repreſentation of a Favour given by God to Men; the Devotions that attend it, are, partly returning Thanks to God for that Favour, and partly praying for ſuch a Diſpoſition of Heart, as may make a faithful Uſe of it. The Devotions and Services added, are proper to promote the End of ſuch Exhibitions; but 'tis evident they are

inſtituted by Human Piety, and for that Reaſon can't be Sacramental.

2. Secondly, We are inform'd in this Account of a Sacrament, that it conſiſts of Two Parts, as different from each other as our Souls and Bodies, and yet as cloſely united tho' ſeparable. 1. An Outward and Viſible Sign: 2. An Inward and Spiritual Favour. Our Nature being compos'd of a Body as well as a Soul, ſeems to require Material and Senſible Means, as well as Spiritual: And not only ſo, but a Method entirely Spiritual could affect only Single Perſons; the Glory of God, and the mutual Edification of his People, would be loſt. Theſe are naturally promoted by that Viſible Application which God makes to them in Sacraments; this being obſervable by all preſent, and the Goodneſs of it celebrated by them in ſome Common Devotions. The Ultimate End of all Parts of Religion, is the Eternal Happineſs of the Souls of Men. The Mediate or Subordinate Ends, are the Purgation, the Improvement, the Diſpoſition of thoſe Souls for that Happineſs. Heaven is to be conſider'd as a Peculiar State of Bliſs and Glory, not to be obtain'd but by God's Favour, and not to be enjoy'd but by ſuch Souls, as have Capacities, Accompliſhments, and Inclinations agree-

agreeable to ſuch a State. The obtaining theſe is the Work of this Life; depending partly on the natural Faculties of the Soul it ſelf, and partly on Influences from God: 'Tis naturally impoſſible to make us virtuous by Force, for Virtue is nothing but a free Choice of Good. God therefore applies to us in Sacraments, in outward and viſible Signs, proper to repreſent his ſpiritual Favours; and by repreſenting them, excite us to a ſuitable Diſpoſition; ſuch as may value them according to their Nature, and improve them to their proper End.

Thirdly, The Outward and Viſible Signs in Sacraments are ordained; 1. As Means: 2. As Pledges of that Inward and Spiritual Favour, which they are appointed to repreſent. St. *Paul* informs us concerning the Elements in the Lord's Supper, that the Effect of receiving them may be Condemnation: But this could not poſſibly be, if the ſpiritual Favour of that Sacrament were inherent in the Signs, or abſolutely annexed to them. And our Saviour ſpeaking, of the Grace of Baptiſm, calls it, not being born of Water only, but of the Spirit: The Spirit affects the Soul to ſuch Purpoſes as God has promiſed, while the Water only repreſents the Effects of his Spirit, and is uſed in Obedience to his Command for that End: They are Means there- 3.

fore, as has been before ſaid, both with Reſpect to the Authority of God, and the Influence of the Solemnity it ſelf. But they are Pledges likewiſe. God being an Inviſible and Spiritual Nature, and we created of a mix'd Nature, partly Corporal and partly Spiritual, having our Spiritual Part dependent in a great Meaſure on the Corporal, and ſubject to many Diſadvantages on that Account; God is pleaſed to condeſcend to our Imperfections, and converſe with us in a ſenſible Manner, to give us material Pledges of his Inviſible and Spiritual Operations and Favours.

4. Laſtly, To make a Sacrament, the Sign muſt be ordained by God, or Chriſt himſelf; all Sacraments muſt be inſtituted by Divine Authority: This is evident from their Nature, as it is here deſcribed: For if they are not ſo inſtituted, tho' they may be Signs, they cannot be Means and Pledges of any ſpiritual Favour. Whatever Ordinances are enjoyn'd by Men, tho' they may be ſo contriv'd as to repreſent ſomething ſpiritual, and have ſome ſpiritual Influence on our Minds, yet they cannot be certain Means of obtaining any particular Favour from Heaven, nor Pledges to aſſure us of it. A Pledge is ſomething delivered as Security for ſomething promiſed; and this muſt be given either by the Perſon who

makes the Promiſe, or at leaſt ſome other that is able to make it good. Now it is plainly preſumptuous in Men, to promiſe us any ſpiritual Favour upon their own Account; and it is as preſumptuous to ſuppoſe God obliged by any Inſtitutions but his own. From whence it muſt follow, that all true Sacraments are ordained by God, or by Chriſt, or by Divine Authority.

Baptiſm.

The Nature of a Sacrament in general being ſettled, the Church proceeds to explain what is Peculiar to each: In Baptiſm, the Outward and Viſible Sign or Form, is Water. This is appointed by God, as a proper Repreſentative of the Favour which is granted in this Sacrament; as Water has been uſed for the cleanſing of the Body, ſo it naturally ſets before us the Effects of Baptiſm, the Purgation of the Soul. In the Uſe of this Outward Sign, our Saviour ſeems to have given us an Epitome, or ſo many General Heads of Devotion, to direct our Minds to juſt Sentiments and Reflections: He has ordered it to be adminiſtred in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt; pointing out to us the diſtinct Parts of all Three Perſons, in the Gracious OEconomy of our Redemption, or Regeneration. The Inward and Spiritual Favour, is a Death unto Sin, and a new Birth unto Righteouſneſs; *i. e.* this Bleſſed End

Outward Sign.

promoted by the Spirit of God. This particular Expreſſion ſeems to be form'd, not upon the Sacramental Inſtitution, but upon the Circumſtances of the Original Adminiſtration, a juſt Application of the Deſign of Baptiſm to the Conſcience of the baptized; and it is ſupported by Apoſtolical Authority; but this only regards the Influence this Sacrament ought to have upon the Perſons that receive it.

Inward Grace. The Spirit by which Chriſtians are regenerated, is the ſpiritual Favour repreſented; and in this is contained, not only the Application of the Covenant of Redemption, but the Evangelical Covenant too. It firſt ſhows us, that we are by Nature born in Sin, and Children of Wrath; *i. e.* conſider'd as the Sons of *Adam*, in Enmity and Rebellion with reſpect to God, and no way reconciled to him, entitled to no Favour from him; conſider'd in this our natural State, we are a corrupted Race, and ſhould proceed upon that Corruption in a Courſe of Sin, the Objects of God's Wrath: But we being hereby admitted as Chriſtians, are not only admitted to that common Favour, which all Parts of Mankind may enjoy by the Performance of their reſpective Duties, but as Children of Grace, an Evangelical Relation and Endearment. In order to the Application of Chriſt's Merits, all were to perform ſuch Duties, as their

Vid. *Ch.* 4.

Situation in Life demanded of them; but we, on whom the Ends of the World are come, are particularly obliged to devote our ſelves to Chriſt in Baptiſm; and by ſo doing, are indulg'd particular Advantages. Now are we the Sons of God, admitted to the ſingular Privilege of an Evangelical Education, his Inſtructions, Influence and Protection; and in Conſequence of them, a peculiar Inheritance reſerved in Heaven for us, tho' it does not yet appear what we ſhall be.

The Lord's Supper.

As to the other Sacrament, there can be no Difficulty in the Outward and Viſible Signs: 'Tis plain they muſt be Bread and Wine; conſidering the Time when this Sacrament was inſtituted, the particular Occaſion of the meeting of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, which was the Celebration of the Paſchal Supper; in which it is univerſally allow'd, he was himſelf repreſented, and is therefore called the Lamb of God. The Words of this Inſtitution ſeem moſt naturally to imply this, and this only: Tho' I have hitherto been repreſented in this Manner, in the Paſchal Lamb, I will no longer be ſo repreſented for the future; this Bread is, or repreſents my Body; this Wine is, or repreſents my Blood: And it is plain, this Bread and Wine are to be bleſſed or conſecrated by Prayer; the Effect of which Prayer, is not any natural Change

Outward Signs.

Matt. 26. 26. 1 Cor. 10. 16.

in thoſe Elements, but a Relative Change only. They are thereby prepared and applied to the Repreſentation of Chriſt's Body and Blood, but ſtill remain real natural Bread and Wine.

Inward Grace. The Inward and Spiritual Grace in this Sacrament, is the Body and Blood of Chriſt, which will eaſily be allowed to ſignify their Effects, the Favours purchaſed by Chriſt for Mankind, which are in this Repreſentation recognized and aſſured to the Communicants. The Benefits therefore of this Sacrament are ſaid by the Church, *to be the ſtrengthning and refreſhing of our Souls by the Body and Blood of Chriſt, as our Bodies are by the Bread and Wine.* Strength or Refreſhment to the Soul, is the natural Effect of this Grace or Favour, as it is of Bread and Wine to the Body: But then we muſt diſtinguiſh between receiving the Signs, and receiving the Things ſignified; Bread and Wine are really, and indeed, the Body and Blood of Chriſt to none, but ſuch as receive them worthily, *i. e.* only to the Faithful. We may therefore, according to our uſual Phraſe, receive the Sacrament, and not receive the Sacramental Grace. And if ſo, we receive no Strength, no Refreſhment in our Souls; for as looking on Bread and Wine will not nouriſh the Body, ſo the receiving the Signs of Grace only, and not the Grace it ſelf, cannot nouriſh

riſh or refreſh the Soul. Natural Nouriſhment, if hinder'd by ſome Diſtemper from entring the Stomach, can be of no Uſe tho' in the Mouth; and even when it is admitted to the Stomach it ſelf, it may poſſibly become Fuel to Diſtempers, according as the Man is diſpoſed.

Not inſtantly compleated.

It may probably be uſeful here to obſerve, that the Favour repreſented in either Sacrament, is not ſuppoſed to be inſtantly compleated. When the baptized Perſon is ſaid to be regenerate, he is to be underſtood to be then put into a State of Regeneration, as many in Scripture are ſaid upon their Converſion and Baptiſm to be ſav'd. This regenerating Spirit is communicated gradually, as the Soul is diſpoſed to receive it; as the Perſons ſaid to be ſaved, are afterwards to work out their own Salvation. This appears from the Prayers offer'd up in our Baptiſmal Service, after the Perſons are baptized; a new Principle of Life is then promiſed, and in ſome Meaſure receiv'd; and we pray God they may go on unto Perfection: But all are not like *John the Baptiſt*, full of the Holy Ghoſt from their Mother's Womb; and this gradual Communication of the Spirit may take off our Prejudice againſt adminiſtring this Sacrament to ſuch as cannot at preſent perform the reciprocal Obligations imply'd in it.

Accordingly, in the Lord's Supper, the Application of Chriſt's Merits is recognized and repreſented, and God does in the Elements, as intelligibly, as if it were in a Voice from Heaven, aſſure us of it. But this is a general Aſſurance, not an actual inſtant Pardon of all the Sins we have committed, not a kind of ſolemn Judgment and Juſtification pronounced. This likewiſe appears from the Devotions uſed in our Service after the Adminiſtration. The Sacrament aſſures us of the Favour repreſented, ſo far as it depends on God; but then it depends likewiſe on our Perſeverance in our Duty, and therefore the Church determines it to the Faithful.

The Inward Grace diſtinguiſhed in each Sacrament.

The laſt thing that I think need be mentioned, is the Diſtinction between the two ſpiritual Favours repreſented in the two Sacraments: I doubt they are too often confounded. The Word Grace may incline moſt People, by the common Uſe of it, to underſtand in both, the Influence of the Spirit. This is peculiarly repreſented in Baptiſm, in order to our Regeneration; but the Inward and Spiritual Grace or Favour in the Lord's Supper, is not the ſame with this; 'tis the Body and Blood of Chriſt, *i. e.* the Application of their Expiation. This is to affect our Souls with devout Gratitude, and a ſerious Concern for that important

portant Bleſſing; and where this Temper attends this ſolemn Service, this Sacrament is not deſtitute of Grace in the common Senſe, as it ſignifies the Influence of God's Spirit: But that Influence is not the Inward and Spiritual Favour immediately repreſented.

I ſhall but juſt mention one or two Abuſes or Miſrepreſentations, and then I think we may ſafely make a general Appeal to the ſerious Part of the Chriſtian World, for the unexceptionable Uſefulneſs of the Chriſtian Sacraments. And Firſt, if a Sacrament be a Sign, and Means, and Pledge of Grace; this Sign muſt be exhibited to all, on whom it has any Influence; this Means muſt be uſed by all that are to expect the End; this Pledge muſt be received by all who enjoy that Grace: And if ſo, How groſs is the Abuſe of the Lord's Supper in Maſſes for the Dead! If this be the Nature of a Sacrament, dead Men can no more receive any Inward and Spiritual Grace by Maſſes, than Idols can receive Divine Perfections by being worſhipp'd.

Abuſes.

Maſſes for the Dead.

Again, if a Sacrament exhibits to us ſome Spiritual Favour given us, and ſo is an Application made by God to Men; then changing the Elements in the Lord's Supper into a material Sacrifice of our own, and making them an Application of Men to God,

Sacrifice inſtead of Sacrament.

God, exhibiting to him, what he is to be underſtood to exhibit to us; urging this continual Remembrance on God, not our own Hearts: This is offering up ſtrange Fire, it is excluding the Sacrament by the Sacrifice, it is being guilty of Sacrilege under the Appearance of Devotion.

To conclude: Having in the Ninth Chapter accounted for the Operations of the Spirit, and in the Eighth for the Satisfaction of Chriſt, and in this for the Uſefulneſs of Publick Worſhip, and here renounc'd theſe Abuſes, I cannot apprehend any great Prejudice againſt the Chriſtian Sacraments, which are founded on theſe Principles. If any ariſe from Miſtakes about their Neceſſity, the Church reaſonably expected ſhe might give Satisfaction, by her manner of expreſſing that Neceſſity; ſhe ſays, with great Judgment and Charity, *They are generally neceſſary:* Herein ſhe leaves room for all thoſe Caſes that can reaſonably be excepted. She does not ſuppoſe God humourſomely to place the Salvation of Mankind upon any external Action, how important ſoever; but ſhe juſtly ſuppoſes, that whoever frowardly and obſtinately rejects God's ſolemn Inſtitutions, ordain'd to educate them to Eternal Life, do indeed make themſelves unworthy of it, and reject the Counſel of God againſt themſelves.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

The common Prejudice arising from the Number of Professions, Infidels and Scoffers, consider'd.

THE Matter in Question is of the utmost Importance; no less than the Eternal Condition of our Nature depends on it: 'Tis therefore most unworthy of Rational Creatures, to give themselves up to any Human Authority in Prejudice to Religion. It is indeed more easy to observe Numbers and Noise, than to take a just View, and make a prudent Judgment of the Reasons of Things. But whatever Force must be allowed to Example or Authority in General, Why should not good ones be apply'd to balance the bad? One Person of Judgment, Virtue and Piety, is of more Weight than a Thousand profligate Blasphemers. Whoever finds himself affected by any such Characters, would do well to read the Twelth Chapters to the *Hebrews*. If Examples have such Influence, the Spirit of God has there indulg'd our Infirmity, and set

Good Examples balance Bad.

Heb. 12.

ſet before us great Variety: The Effect of Faith, in the remarkable Inſtances there recorded, was ſometimes a manly Contempt of all the Bribes, all the Advantages that a vicious World could offer; and a ſteady Proſecution of the Will of God with an uncorrupted Sincerity. Sometimes it was a virtuous Conſtancy and Patience under great Severities; a dutiful Submiſſion to the Will of Heaven, tho' highly diſagreeable to Fleſh and Blood. Sometimes it was a Firmneſs of Mind under the Proſpect of Death, a Heart unſhaken by its Terrors, faithful to it ſelf and God; not ſo mean as to overvalue Life, to think it the greateſt Misfortune to change this World for the other; nor ſo guilty as to be afraid of Death for the Sake of its Conſequences, the final Determinations of the Righteous Judgment of God.

Variety of Profeſſions.

The Variety of Religious Profeſſions may at firſt ſurprize us, till we look further, and conſider the Cauſes that may be probably aſſign'd for them; but it ought by no means to prejudice our Hearts againſt Religion in General, or more particularly againſt any Principle in Chriſtianity. As for thoſe Parts of the Earth that are ſtill Heathens, they have never enjoy'd the gracious Means of Converſion. The *Jews* are too remarkably oppreſs'd by God's Judgments to be of any Authority. The Religion

ligion of the *Turks* and *Saracens* was evidently begun by Craft, and propagated by Violences. The Pretenſions of *Rome*, ſo far as they differ from other Chriſtian Churches, have this ſtrong Preſumption againſt 'em, that they all viſibly tend to promote a ſecular Intereſt. And whatever Controverſies have ariſen in the reſt of the Chriſtian World, the great Principles of Faith have been unanimouſly maintain'd. So far, therefore, there ſeems to be no great Danger of our being perverted by Authority. But the greateſt Danger is nearer Home, and we can hardly eſcape converſing with it: Entirely to avoid it, we muſt, as St. *Paul* ſays, *go out of the World.* The only way to ſecure our ſelves, is to hold faſt our Integrity; to eſtabliſh our Souls as well as we can, in a rational and ſincere Account of Religion, and then reſign our whole Hearts to it.

Infidels more dangerous.

There is not a Nation upon Earth ſo happy, as not to produce ſome Infidels: And many more ſtill, who in Contradiction to their own Judgment and Conſcience, live ſuch a Life, as a ſober Heathen deſpiſes; and may, on that Account, be ſuppoſed Infidels too.

Where Men give themſelves up to a looſe Converſation, that ſufficiently explains all that they ſay againſt any Part of Religion. Such

Such Men are continually ſtifling the Evidence of their own Hearts, keeping down their Convulſions, and providing againſt the Rebellion of their Spirits. And becauſe they are ſenſible, that Religious Examples have uſually ſome Influence, at leaſt on the Judgment, if not on the Practice of Mankind; they therefore endeavour to leſſen that Influence, by baſe and unworthy Repreſentations; by treating 'em with Scorn and Ridicule, as injudicious and fond Enthuſiaſms. 'Tis uſual for thoſe that have broke looſe from Religion, to talk of the Prejudices and Credulity of thoſe that ſubmit their Souls to it, and depend on it for their Happineſs. But no part of Nature ſhows the Strength of Prejudice, and the Eaſineſs of Credulity, ſo much as the Lives and Principles of ſuch Men. The Religious Man reſigns himſelf to what he thinks the plain Promiſes of God; fully aſſur'd, that he's able to perform more than human Reaſon can conceive. But ſuch Men are averſe to what all ſhould, in Intereſt, wiſh true; and they are willing to believe what all the Wit of Man, in the ſeveral Ages, could never make appear at all probable. And yet it is not reaſonable to ſuppoſe, of any great Number, that they either do, or can believe it. It may ſeem hard to account otherwiſe for a continued Wickedneſs, for a Life entirely diſſolute, without any

Scoffers,

Moſt Credulous.

Many can't believe what they profeſs.

any Intervals of a Chriſtian. But if we conſider the Nature of Sin, together with the Craft and Power of the Devil, and the advantageous Inſtruments he uſes to divert ſome Men from all Thoughts of Religion, 'twill appear a probable Account of the moſt habitual Preſumption. One Sin naturally promotes another; though it may not be conſented to at firſt without ſome Reluctance, it inſinuates by Degrees, till it poſſeſſes the whole Man. The Paſſions are excited to Rebellion; proper Encouragements are provided to inſpirit 'em, and no Propoſals muſt be heard to put an end to the Confuſion. Theſe Means, together with ſome Buſineſs, may poſſibly ſettle many Souls in a profound Impiety, without any Infidelity. They are no more Infidels, than Men aſleep are dead. They are ſomething like 'em, and may be miſtaken for 'em. But their Conviction will at length riſe more ſtrong and active, though probably as Criminals awake to Execution.

Many propoſe to repent.

But there are others that have not gone ſo far, have not attain'd to this unconcern'd Temper, but are frequently interrupted by uneaſy Apprehenſions, though they outwardly appear confident and unmov'd. And yet theſe Apprehenſions are over-rul'd by a headſtrong Paſſion for preſent Pleaſures, and perhaps the treacherous Project of

of a diſtant Repentance: Such Perſons can't reſolve to break off abruptly and violently from their former Vices, but they conclude they may repent Time enough to prevent their Damnation. By ſuch Means they divert the natural Influence of their Faith, and live like the worſt of Heathens, under a full Conviction of the Truth and Evidence of Chriſtianity. We cannot therefore ſafely conclude, from the moſt diſſolute Life, that they who lead it, believe nothing of Religion: So far from it, that if they ſhould profeſs the moſt impudent Infidelity, we might ſuſpect they belied their Souls. We have the Authority of the great *Roman* Orator to confirm this Suſpicion, and all the Advantages of the Chriſtian Revelation, to confirm that Authority: "They lye, ſays he, that ſay they "believe there's no God; for though they "appear eaſy and confident in the Day-"time, they are afraid and tremble, when "they are alone in the Night.

Such Men no Argument againſt Religion.

But if we ſhould ſuppoſe the Great Heroes in Impiety to be above all Fear; if we ſhould allow 'em to be fully eſtabliſh'd in Infidelity, it will not from hence follow, with the leaſt Shadow of Reaſon, that there is not ſufficient Evidence for Religion. Is it not unreaſonable to conclude in their Favour, againſt the concurrent Teſtimony of ſo many Generations? Eſpecially when we

we ſee ſerious Reaſonings on one Side, and on the other little but confident Trifling. Is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the Infidels of each Age, have been the only wiſe Men in it? If not, Why ſhould their Judgment, if it may be call'd ſo, be ſo predominant? Why ſhould the ſober Part of Mankind be blinded with Superſtition, any more than they with Senſuality and Vice; together with the Confuſion and Terrors that did at leaſt one while attend 'em?

Free-Thinkers, as they call themſelves.

There may be ſome few that are fond of this Character, and yet live a thoughtful and regular Life; and ſuch, of all Infidels, are the moſt unnatural: Their Infidelity is aggravated by their Thinking, as Murder is by being committed in cool Blood. But ſuch are no Exceptions from this general Charge, that all Degrees of Infidelity ariſe from proportionable Degrees of Vice. Such ſeem to engage at firſt, out of a meer Humour, a deſpicable Vanity, and work themſelves up in Time, by Confidence and Self-Admiration, into an obſtinate Enmity to Heaven. And though their Wickedneſs be wholly ſpiritual, it entirely enſlaves their Souls.

Since therefore, among thoſe that may be ſuppoſed Infidels, ſome, who have made no inconſiderable Appearance, have ſo divided their Time and Thoughts, between their Buſineſs and their Pleaſures, that they

have never ſeriouſly conſider'd, either the Evidence, or the Nature of the Chriſtian Faith. Since others, with the Pride and Obſtinacy of the ancient *Greeks*, ſeek after Wiſdom, and are too polite to be Chriſtians: Since the reſt overwhelm themſelves with various Habits, and by that means, make Religion the moſt dreadful Thing in Nature: And when 'tis made ſo, find it neceſſary to remove the Foundation of thoſe Terrors, thoſe Apprehenſions that mix Gall with their Pleaſures, and make their Hearts ſorrowful in the midſt of Laughter: Since this is the Caſe, 'Twould be moſt unreaſonable to conclude from their Infidelity, that there is not ſufficient Evidence for Religion, though their Numbers were much greater than they are.

From the whole, 'tis but common Prudence to judge for our ſelves. To conſider the Evidence of Religion, in its Original Authorities; not to ſuſpect it on the Miſrepreſentations of its Enemies: To drink at the Fountain Head of that living Water, not where 'tis ſtagnated and poiſon'd by Vice.

The Objection urg'd, It may perhaps be more particularly inſiſted on, How come ſo many of good Senſe, and good Education, not only to throw off the Influence, and, in all Appearance, the Belief of Religion, but to treat it with the utmoſt Scorn and Con-

tempt, as if they were ſure there can be nothing in it? This is in a great Meaſure anſwer'd, in what has been ſaid, which I therefore refer to. I ſhall here, however, deſcribe what I think the gradual Misfortune of ſuch Perſons, and then conſider their Conduct, with reſpect to the Principles of Religion.

Anſwer'd more fully.

Their Misfortune is falling, when young, into prophane Converſations; and being at firſt inſenſibly infected by 'em. Perſons who allow themſelves in a Negligence, at firſt in a Negligence only, with reſpect to the Importance of Religion; and then take vicious Liberties, in the common Courſe of their Lives; and then to keep down the Tumults of their Conſcience, come to treat the moſt venerable Truths with Contempt and Scorn: Such Perſons will not only deſtroy all the good Qualities of their own Minds, but will become likewiſe common Nuiſances: They'll ſcatter Miſchief like a Peſtilence, among thoſe that live or converſe with them. Young Perſons that are ſo unhappy, too often tread the ſame Steps they have trod before 'em; and arrive, in Time, to the ſame Temper and Conduct. Converſing with ſuch Men, is ſometimes an Unhappineſs attending Buſineſs or Education, but more frequently the Effect of a vicious Choice.

Impious Converſation leads to Vice.

Impiety leads to Vice.

The Principles of Religion are firſt ſettled in the Mind; and a Regard to 'em enforc'd by that Authority, under which Providence or Nature places our Childhood: And when we come to be more at large in the World, there ſeems to be a ſort of perverſe Satisfaction, in hearing the Dictates of that Authority diſputed, contradicted, and exploded. We ſeem to ſuppoſe, that we advance ſo much the more in Manhood and Liberty, as we ſhake off the Reſtraints of our greener Years. Principles which we chuſe our ſelves, are hardly remov'd after a long and quiet Poſſeſſion; but thoſe that are preſcrib'd us, and have not been made our own by a rational Review and Conviction, though naturally confirm'd by Time, are too apt to be diſpoſſeſs'd, when young Minds are encourag'd by evil Communication to rebel againſt 'em. But were we ſo well diſpoſed, as to be more tenacious of 'em, for the ſake of that Authority that preſcrib'd 'em, yet ſuch is the inſinuating Contagion of irreligious and prophane Converſation, that 'twould probably overcome 'em in many Inſtances: If it don't raiſe in us ſo much Indignation, as to prevail with us to oppoſe it, or at leaſt avoid it, it has already ſome Intereſt in our Heart, and will, in Time, engroſs it. He that can be diverted with diſingenuous Reflections on Religion; or, ſo much as bear 'em with-

out Uneaſineſs, is alraady arriv'd at the old academick Indifference, and will improve faſtenough: Though, at firſt, he cou'd not have heard groſs Blaſphemies without ſhivering, not without falling on his Knees, or at leaſt lifting up his Eyes and Heart to Heaven in Interceſſion for 'em, he'll ſcon join in thoſe Blaſphemies, and burleſque his former Devotions. Or if he does not immediately proceed ſo far, yet extinguiſhing all Devotion, and ſettling in his Soul a ſort of Independency and Diſregard of Heaven, this will introduce him to vicious Courſes, and they'll make him Earthly, Senſual, Deviliſh.

A zealous Spirit in Religion, regulated by Judgment and Charity, is the ſame with a generous Spirit in common Life. It warms the Soul with a Thouſand uſeful and heavenly Affections; while the contrary Spirit is fit only for *Hobbes*'s State of Nature; a State in which tis made independent both of God and Man. To maintain the Character of a Chriſtian, not as that Character is drawn from the general Practice of a vicious World, but from the Purity of the Goſpel, a great deal of ſerious Piety is abſolutely neceſſary. It requires a full Aſſurance of Faith, a firm Dependence on the Declarations of God, and a Heart truly affected with the Demonſtrations of the Spirit. How low then muſt they fall, who

are grown inſenſible of their Obligations to God, and their Dependance on him? Who look upon all devout and fervent Applications to him, as childiſh Superſtitions? What ſhall ſtem the impetuous Paſſions and Appetites of Youth? What ſhall balance the Importunities of diſſolute Companions? What ſhall oppoſe a Succeſſion of Temptations, dreſs'd in all the Gaieties of a wild Imagination? And when Men are given up to theſe, 'tis but by Chance, if they don't vindicate 'em too: Either Stupidity, or wanton Infidelity, will probably be the Conſequence. Men that have deſtroy'd the Influence of Religion on their Life, are, if they think at all, in as fair a way to deny its plaineſt Principles, as he that disbelieves the Providence of God, is to deny his Being. For what ſhall ſupport ſuch Perſons in their unlucky Intervals of Reflection? Their Vices will be ſo far from making 'em Immortal, that they'll increaſe their Infirmities; thoſe Infirmities that give 'em frequent Hints of an approaching Diſſolution. As the Body can't be always and conſtantly maintain'd, in all the Humour and Jollity of a Luxuriant Health, ſo neither will the Soul be perpetually diverted from ſerious Thoughts; it will not be perpetually led in a Fairy Circle: As their Spirits will ſometimes ſubſide, ſo their Thoughts will ſometimes riſe higher than their Senſes carry

Vice leads to Infidelity.

carry 'em: And to be a Reproach to themſelves, as often as this ſhall happen, to caſt a Melancholick Eye, either backward on their own unnatural Extravagancies, or forward, on a Confuſion of Terrors, as their certain Conſequences: This cannot be long born; and this will put 'em upon a crafty Examination of the Evidence againſt 'em, to find out ſome By-way to eſcape the Truth. In this Caſe, the great Principles of Religion muſt be induſtriouſly diſguis'd; every Thing muſt at firſt be repreſented doubtful and uncertain. But this Twilight of Scepticiſm can't laſt long: They ſoon conclude, that the Generality of Mankind have follow'd their Leaders without Queſtions: That they have been ſhackled with Cuſtom and Superſtition. This Point being ſettled, they break all the Bands of Religion, without Exception; and flatter themſelves with an uncommon Vigor of Soul, whereas all this is the Violence of Dæmoniacks.

But however, having thus overcome all Fear of God, they can't preſently lay aſide all Regard for Man: They are ſenſible, that what they call Prejudice, has the general Vogue and Favour of the World, that a profeſs'd Infidel is, to moſt People, as frightful as a Spectre.

Infidelity leads to Scoffing.

And for this Reaſon, their next Buſineſs is to leſſen the Credit of Religion with others. And becauſe all Serioufneſs, all thoughtful Application of Mind, all juſt and plain Repreſentations are likely to prevent their Succeſs, therefore ludicrous and buffoon Amuſements, are choſen at once, to diſguiſe the Things, and caſt a Miſt before the Eyes that are to judge of 'em.

That Religion that can bear the Teſt which theſe Scoffers impoſe, ſuch Treatment, ſuch Ridicule, without ſuffering ſome Damage, muſt be well fortify'd indeed: It muſt not only be conſcious of its own Truth and Dignity; but diſengag'd too, from all the Infirmities of Humanity: An innocent Man may have Vigor and Reſolution enough, to go through all the Tortures of the Wrack, and triumph over the Malice of his Enemies ſo far, but 'tis probable he muſt afterwards live an unhappy Cripple. 'Tis not to be doubted, but this inſolent Uſage weakens the Sinews of Religion, when it can't touch its Life; it ruins the Zeal and Piety of many, whoſe Faith ſtands unſhaken; or, however, ſtands, tho' ſhaken.

Thus are Men led from one Degree of this Spirit to another, till they are at laſt confirm'd in Wantonneſs and Arrogance, in a Contempt of all Equity, Truth and Decency:

cency: So that it may be juſtly queſtion'd upon our Saviour's Rule, Whether they are any longer proper Objects for Admonition? It ought however, to ſtop the Infection of ſuch Examples, that their Conduct is inhuman, their Reaſoning weak and precarious, and their whole Scheme brutal and uncomfortable.

Such Conduct inhuman.

A ludicrous Way of treating the moſt important Things, is contrary to that Judgment and Decency, on which all Mankind have agreed. They all agree in treating all Perſons, and all Affairs according to their Dignity: To take or give a Jeſt for a ſolid Argument, and Blaſphemy for Conviction, this does not look like a ſuperior Genius; a Genius form'd to make Diſcoveries for the Good of Mankind. Chriſtians would without doubt, part with all their glorious Privileges very unwillingly; but could it be ſubſtantially proved, that they have really been impoſed on, that they have been flatter'd and deluded with falſe Hopes, that what has been ſaid of Heaven is no better than Romance, that they are all Mortal without Reſerve, and muſt die like the Beaſts that periſh: If they were thus degraded by ſerious Evidence, by Perſons that behaved like the Officers of vindictive Juſtice, ſhowing themſelves concern'd for what they were obliged to: In this Caſe, Chriſtians would part with their beloved Prin-

Principles, as they do with their dying Friends, and comfort themſelves as well as they could with thoſe that ſurvived. They would be ſatisfied with the natural Entertainments of this Life, and ſave that Time which their Devotions and Proviſions for another, have hitherto taken up: But to have things play'd with, which if true are the moſt ſolemn Calamities; this is too unnatural, too provoking. To run to a Friend with an Air of Gaiety and Joy, to laugh in his Face, and tell him, he was condemn'd to die, and muſt very ſpeedily be executed; this compar'd to the Conduct of theſe Triflers with Human Nature, would be a decent and an affectionate Behaviour. Can it be ſaid, that it would not be an Honour, and a ſubſtantial Advantage to our Nature, to have a Religion inſtituted by a Wiſdom and Goodneſs abſolutely perfect: To have ſo much Concern expreſs'd for it by the Almighty, to have a free Communication with the Majeſty of Heaven, an eaſy Acceſs to the Throne of Grace? Or, are not the Particulars of the Chriſtian Religion agreeable to Creatures of our Claſs? Do the Duties it enjoins deſtroy the natural Happineſs, or the natural Perfections, either of Mind or Body? Do they diſturb the Peace and good Order of the World? Do they propagate Contention by unſettling either Property or Power?

er? Do the Articles propoſed to be believed, contain any thing incredible to a modeſt, well-inform'd Mind? Do they contain any thing, that a ſober or regular Mind can wiſh falſe? There are indeed ſome things that are uſually called Myſteries, *i. e.* ſome things but imperfectly revealed; illuminated but on one Side, while the other remains dark. This puts ſuch Perſons in Mind, that they are but Men, that they are only Rational, and not Omniſcient: But when they expoſe ſuch Belief, as believing what we do not and cannot comprehend, or in any Words, affirming without Ideas; this is only the Raillery of a peculiar Spirit, that will be confin'd to no Bounds, Human or Divine. No Man can believe explicitly, *i. e.* affirm one thing of another in his Mind, without conceiving both: But as I have obſerved before, it is not incredible, that ſome things may contain more in them, than we can at preſent conceive; but then concerning that Part of them which is beyond our Conceptions, we are not obliged to affirm any Thing. But farther, there is ſomething likewiſe in the Revelations of Chriſtianity, that their diſſolute State of Soul muſt needs wiſh falſe. They have not ſo ill an Opinion of themſelves, as to be weary of their Being; nor can Nature be againſt its Improvement by a glorious Immortality; but

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it is the Reverſe that frightens them, it is the other Side upon which they read their own Doom, that makes them wiſh it counterfeit, and endeavour to perſuade themſelves it is: Could it be allowed them that there is no Hell, they would probably ſubmit to all other Articles; they would not indeed qualify themſelves for Heaven, but they would ſcarce think it worth their while to diſpute againſt it, or any thing it requires: But ſhould that be ſuppoſed, ſhould it be allowed, that there is no poſitive State of Puniſhment, yet Spirits eſtabliſhed in vicious Habits, muſt either be annihilated, or they muſt be miſerable for ever without any particular Inſtitutions. The Crime therefore of Chriſtianity, with which they are ſo much provok'd, muſt be the ſupporting the Evidence of Nature for an Immortal Spirit, independent on the Body: But that Evidence is it ſelf ſo ſtrong, that we might ſafely engage whenever they overcome it, to ſurrender all our Revelations, to adorn its Triumph. But if any ſerious Doubts did indeed ſtick with them, yet have not the Evidence and Importance of the Contents of Chriſtianity, procur'd it the univerſal Veneration of Mankind whereever it has been publiſhed? Does not this demand at leaſt a decent Deportment in relation to it? If this can't make ſuch hard Hearts relent as to their Doubts, it

ſhould

ſhould at leaſt prevail for ſome Caution, ſome Reſerve, ſome Gravity in their Conduct; to look down on the reſt of Mankind as the *Philiſtine* Monſter did on *David*; to defy the Armies of the living God with a full Aſſurance of Victory; this Inſolence may diſmay and confound ſome, but where is the Honour, where is the Juſtice, where is the Humanity of ſporting with ſuch things, the moſt ſolemn Concerns of the whole Race? Of burleſquing the Faith and Hopes of the moſt conſiderable Nations upon Earth, concerning an Eternal State? Such Conduct is moſt inhuman.

Again, as the Conduct of ſuch Perſons is inhuman, ſo is their Reaſoning weak, their Confidence is childiſhly grounded: 'Tis a known Fault in Reaſoning, to let the Concluſion contain more than the Premiſes; the Superſtructure ſhould bear a juſt Proportion to its Foundation; and yet to this boyiſh Error is owing the very Life of this Character. Some ſingle Places of Scripture, either baſely perverted, or in themſelves obſcure, are ſufficient Matter of Triumph: They don't conſider, that if they reaſon falſe, a Confuſion of Miſery waits them. They don't conſider that they walk upon a Precipice, and if they leave that Path that univerſal Judgment and Experience recommend; if they deſpiſe it for its Plainneſs, becauſe vulgar Feet have trod it;

Such Reaſoning is weak and precarious.

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if they go too near the Brink out of Wantonneſs or Vanity, or for the Sake of ſome pleaſing Appearance, they muſt not expect an Angel or a Miracle to ſave them. They don't conſider, that tho' it might poſſibly leſſen their Diſgrace among Men, to appear to have ſomething to ſay, yet fixing upon ſeeming Contradiction, or ſeeming Abſurdity, or ſome diſputed Book in Scripture, as a Criminal does upon a Flaw in his Indictment, will have no Influence on God.

Weak Pretences. As long as the Original Authority of the Scripture remains firm, their not being able to underſtand, or not able to reconcile ſome things in it, or the Doubt that has formerly been concerning ſome Parts of it, can in no Meaſure juſtify their Contempt of the whole; no Writings, eſpecially of ſo ſublime a Nature, that have paſs'd thro' ſo many Hands, and ſo many Generations, can be ſuppoſed perfectly clear of all Difficulties, or all ſeeming Inconſiſtencies. But ſhould thoſe Books be reſign'd, whoſe Authority has ever been queſtion'd, they would not get rid of one Doctrine, one Precept, or one Article of Faith; there is nothing contain'd in theſe, but what is confirm'd abundantly in the others: But as theſe diſputed Books were always receiv'd by ſome Churches, and after a ſhort time by all, ſo their doubting of them for ſome Time, ſhows

ſhows only with what Caution, with what Judgment the Scriptures of the New Teſtament were receiv'd, and conſequently ſupports their Authority.

Corrupt Authorities.

Another Head upon which this Character uſually indulges its Petulancy, is, a few corrupt Authorities, or ſcandalous Examples, or groundleſs Suppoſitions: Theſe are its Nouriſhment, from theſe ſuch Perſons would be thought to draw very powerful Concluſions. But ſhould it be ſuppoſed, that ſome Perſons juſtly eminent for their Services in the Church, unhappily fall in any ſingle Point of Faith, or unwarily inſiſt on a licentious Uſe of Reaſon in Oppoſition to Faith it ſelf; muſt their Authority in theſe Particulars be indulg'd as a Voice from Heaven, and all they have writ before in Defence of Religion, only be allowed pardonable?

Scandalous Examples.

Should it be ſuppoſed, that ſome Men whoſe Function promiſed better Things, have given juſt Offence, by proſtituting that and themſelves to a ſordid Intereſt, and that others have employ'd all their Zeal upon ſome ſtrange Doctrines for the Sake of their clandeſtine Conſequences.

Should it be ſuppoſed, that Humour and Hypocriſy have expoſed Mount *Gerizim*, that falſe Gloſſes and Human Traditions have corrupted *Jeruſalem* it ſelf, yet what is all this to Religion? Weak Judgments will

will indeed take Offence at ſuch Things, and for that Reaſon, others will urge them. But the only true Concluſion from the whole is, that all Orders of Men have their Paſſions, their Infirmities and Imperfections. Since the Word of God is ſtill the ſame, ſince none of theſe have ſpoken, or acted by Inſpiration, Religion ought not to be involv'd in their Errors or ſiniſter Deſigns.

Groundleſs Suppoſitions.

To ſuch Examples, are uſually added ſome precarious and groundleſs Suppoſitions: Particularly, theſe Two; Firſt, That all Religion is ſuperſtitious, and hangs like a Cloud before the brighteſt Parts of Human Nature; that it is an Enemy to all Vivacity of Mind; the Libertine is ſuppoſed on this Account to have great Advantages of the Saint: Now were this in ſome Meaſure true, were ſuch Flights of the Soul confin'd by the Severities of Religion, as well as all Sallies of Paſſion, and all Violences of Secular Affections, yet if it were fix'd hereby upon more ſerious and uſeful Subjects, or only rewarded hereafter for its humble Piety, we ſhould have no Reaſon to complain: But this is ſuppoſed without Grounds. Innocence and Virtue, and Hopes full of Immortality, inſpire a Soul bleſſed by Nature with proper Capacities, to exert it ſelf in a chearful and ſeraphick Uſe of them, while a fallen Angel is degraded

ded in all his Faculties; ſo that we may with as much Juſtice, prefer the Clods of this Earth for their Luſtre to the Stars of Heaven.

The other Suppoſition is, that Religion is an Enemy to Human Liberty, particularly to the Uſe of Reaſon. The Anſwer is obvious; Anarchy is univerſally condemn'd; and Liberty, as it is here apply'd, is groſsly abus'd: Nothing can deſerve that glorious Name, but a Power of diſpoſing our ſelves according to the Laws of our Nature; where this is not abridg'd, our Liberty is entire. 'Tis true, that in this, it is not imply'd as it is in the Civil Liberty, that thoſe Laws ſhould be in ſome Meaſure of our own making; but the Attributes of our Creator are the moſt compleat Security; his abſolute Perfection makes arbitrary Power it ſelf a Bleſſing: That makes it impoſſible that he ſhould injure his Creatures, or that he ſhould confine them from being happy in the proper Uſe of thoſe Faculties which he gave them on Purpoſe to make them ſo. This would be to contradict himſelf, to act inconſiſtently with his own Wiſdom and Goodneſs. This Remonſtrance therefore in behalf of Liberty is but a petulant Calumny; all Moral Prohibitions are as ſo many Sea-Marks to prevent our Ruin: And as for the Uſe of Reaſon, we

may as juſtly complain of Confinement, becauſe we have but one World to move in, as becauſe the Secrets of Heaven are not perfectly explain'd, and laid quite open to our preſent Apprehenſions. Our Reaſon has no Bounds but what our Nature has ſet it; Religion is ſo far from confining it, that it has given it much larger Views than it could otherwiſe have had: No Man will offend againſt the ſtricteſt Obligations of Chriſtianity by ſincere Reaſoning: Let him exert his Mind to the utmoſt of his Capacities, providing he remembers that there is ſtill ſomething beyond its Reach, he is not only ſafe and innocent, but laudably employ'd. But not to remember this, is as childiſh and unnatural, as to conclude our own Horizon the real Limits of the Univerſe.

Such Conduct brutal and uncomfortable.

Laſtly; The third Thing mentioned as an Aggravation of this Character, was this, That his whole Scheme is brutal and uncomfortable; ſuch as nothing but the plaineſt Evidence, or a Mind frighted into it by its guilty Apprehenſions, could poſſibly introduce.

Did the Scorner deſpiſe the reſt of Mankind for meanly reſigning the Privileges of their Nature, or did he wreſtle with the Almighty for ſome Honours to be conferr'd

on them beyond their natural Title; did he boldly attempt to make them as Gods; such Things might be look'd on as the Excrescencies of an Enterprizing Spirit, the Extravagancies of a great and generous Mind. But to propose the contrary, to destroy all the mutual Endearments between God and Man, to dissipate all the Glories of the Christian, and to reduce the Man to common Clay, only work'd into a decent Shape, and put into Motion for a few hasty Years; to suppose him then dissolv'd like a Cloud, and mixing with the Earth from whence he was taken, without any future Consciousness, any Sense of Being; this is a despicable Treachery, a meer Resignation of all the Perfections of his Nature that he might not be disturb'd by his Duties.

It might reasonably be expected however, that such Persons should discover some Confusion, some Shame and Dejection when they talk of such Things: To see them pleasant over such Principles as these; to see them jesting and rallying each other out of all the Powers of the World to come, and diverting themselves with Eternal Death, this is extremely shocking. Should we see them brisk and gay, and drinking each others Health in Cups of Poyson, this would be beyond all Comparison less extravagaut.

Since therefore the Scorner leaves us in this uncomfortable Condition, it is unnatural to be partial to ſuch Inſinuations: We ſhould preſerve at leaſt, an open Heart for all the Comforts of the contrary; we ſhould fortify our Minds againſt their Infection by reviewing the Bleſſings of Chriſtianity.



PART II.

The End of Chriſtianity Recommended, and Reſcued from unfaithful Evaſions.

AS the Deſign of all Degrees of Revelation in General, is to lead the Minds of Men to ſuitable Degrees of Piety and Virtue, either by Inſtruction or Perſuaſion, by clearing the Subjects of it from Doubt and Uncertainty, or by enforcing their Importance with juſt Arguments from their Conſequences; ſo the Chriſtian Revelations purſue this End with a peculiar Spirit. And as the whole Frame is com-

The end of Revelation.

pos'd, as the natural World it ſelf was, by the Word of the Almighty; as Chriſtianity is the Power and Wiſdom of God, ſo the ſeveral Parts of it are properly diſpos'd to ſuſtain and promote the End of the Whole.

The Nature of thoſe Things that are repreſented to the Soul by the Chriſtian Faith, takes it off from all the irregular and miſchievous Affections of this animal Life, and gives it ſuch a Concern for Glory and Honour, and Immortality, as will carry it on to good Advances in ambitious Virtue. To ſatisfy our ſelves with this, that we do believe in Chriſt, and that the World allows us to be Chriſtians, and engage our Minds no farther; this is the Satisfaction of blind Men, while the Heavens declare to others the Glory of God: 'Tis the Belief of a diſtant, unknown Land, a dormant Conſent to a uſeleſs Truth; a Truth that may have great Uſes, when we enter into Particulars, when we are acquainted with the Fruits of the Land, and the Temper of its People; but till then, not worth talking of.

But the general Misfortune is, theſe Fruits are ſuppos'd to be bitter; this Temper is ſuppos'd to be moroſe and uneaſy, both to its ſelf and others; a long Courſe of Hardſhips is ſuppos'd neceſſary.

Religion,

Religion, in order to make an honourable Conqueſt of Mankind, ſhould, at its firſt Approach, make 'em ſenſible that it means 'em no Harm: That it only brings the Bleſſings of a general Reformation; propoſes only to deliver 'em from the worſt of Tyrants, and ſettle 'em under the moſt perfect Government in Naure.

A Prejudice from the Severity of Religion,

'Tis a Prejudice too eaſily ſubmitted to, that our Happineſs in the other World is not to be obtain'd, in the ſtrict Diſcipline of Chriſtianity, without ſuſpending all Happineſs in this. 'Tis taken for granted, we muſt deny our ſelves all the Satisfactions of this Life, and ſubmit to ſevere Grievances in it, upon the Proſpect of a Recompence hereafter. Were this Principle true, it would not conclude againſt the Wiſdom of being Religious; becauſe the Diſproportion between the Two Worlds is ſo extremely great. But the Suppoſition of its Truth, puts Men upon treacherous Contrivances, deceitful Expedients to ſecure both; to indulge their preſent Inclinations without Controul, and provide ſome Method to prevent their future Miſery. I ſhall endeavour, firſt, to take off this Prejudice, and then ſhow the Vanity of ſuch Methods: In hopes that either the one, or the other, or the united Force of both will prevail, will reconcile ſome, at leaſt, to Chriſtianity, by ſhowing the Conſiſtency of God's Diſ-

poſitions, and the regular Happineſs of both Worlds.

Anſwer'd. In order to remove this Prejudice effectually, it muſt be obſerv'd, That all the Advantages a wicked Man can have of one that's moſt Religious, is only this, ſo much Pleaſure as may be had beyond the Bounds of Innocence; for ſo far the ſtricteſt Chriſtian may go: Whatever Satisfactions are free from moral Evil, and from thoſe Things that tend to betray us into it, are left to Men's own Diſcretion, they are not forbid by any of God's Laws. 'Tis true, he ſent us into this World upon more important Buſineſs, to qualify our ſelves for eternal Happineſs in a better. He has therefore commanded us to take Care of this one Thing needful; but when that's ſecur'd, he takes no Pleaſure in uſeleſs injudicious Auſterities: He's willing we ſhou'd make this World as happy as we can; and has accordingly enrich'd it with many Things, not abſolutely neceſſary to the Support of Life, but proper for a comfortable happy Paſſage through it. But if his Wiſdom has directed us to a better Improvement of our Time, than the moſt innocent Diverſions; if his Goodneſs is pleas'd to aſſiſt us in this Improvement; if he has encourag'd us to lay up Treaſures in Heaven, by an induſtrious Application to Piety and Virtue; this, ſure, ought not to be com-

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plain'd of as a Hardſhip. This does not put us upon declaring War with the moſt innocent Appetites in Nature, or reſolving to be pleas'd with nothing, but with being diſpleas'd with every Thing, and making our ſelves as miſerable as we can. Religion is not to anſwer for the Unhappineſs of Men's Judgments or Conſtitutions; and there is nothing properly its own, that deſtroys any Happineſs in Life.

Vice no Advantage.

Nor can it be any Advantage, any Addition to our Happineſs, to indulge our ſelves in thoſe Things that are contrary to Reaſon and Nature, as well as the expreſs Authority of God: All that's beyond what Religion permits, is only deſtructive Violence, only extravagant Frolicks, that may divert for the preſent, but leave Shame and Confuſion, and Miſery behind 'em. All our Duties were enjoin'd us by God, the Author of our Being, the Framer of our Nature: And can it be ſuppos'd he cou'd propoſe any Thing but our Happineſs in thoſe Duties? He can poſſibly have no Intereſt depending: His Nature is incapable of Want, and incapable of Improvement. To imagine he created us for Slaves to ſome Deſign of his own, and laid us under ſuch Obligations as were proper to gratify and preſerve us for that Slavery, this is to abuſe and diſgrace both God and our ſelves. And to ſuppoſe that he created us, and

God enjoin'd all Duty for our Good.

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oblig'd us to the ſeveral Duties of Religion, only for the trifling Satisfaction of being prais'd or admir'd by us, receiving the ſervile Homage, and pompous Pageantry of uſeleſs Devotions; this is to take our Notions of God from our own Pride and Vanity. And if he propos'd our Happineſs by the Duties he has enjoin'd us, we muſt conclude, either that he has been miſtaken in what he propos'd, that the Duties he enjoin'd us, as proper for our Happineſs, are indeed not ſo; or elſe, That a conſtant Practice of thoſe Duties does promote and preſerve our Happineſs: And that this muſt be true, not only in moral Duties, the Parts of natural Religion, but in thoſe likewiſe which are enjoin'd us by his poſitive Inſtitution; and for the ſame Reaſon, in thoſe too which are appointed by human Prudence, when they are proper for that End for which they are appointed; which is, to recommend and ſecure thoſe other Duties, upon which our Happineſs does more immediately depend.

He could not be miſtaken.

Tis impoſſible that God, to whom all Hearts are open, who faſhion'd us beneath in the Earth, ſhould miſtake our Conſtitution, and give us wrong Directions. And therefore it muſt be our Intereſt, it muſt be our Happineſs, to live by his Laws, to believe his Commands the beſt Rules that can be given us. If he deſign'd our Happineſs,

pineſs, he could not ſo far contradict himſelf, as to give Laws that deſtroy it. I can apprehend but one Objection to this, which may ſeem at firſt to remove the Charge from God, and yet continue it on Religion; which is, that the Corruption of our Nature has ſo far alter'd our Conſtitution, that the original Frame of it can't, at preſent, be the Rule of our Actions: That as this Corruption made us incapable of that Obedience in which our Happineſs was originally deſign'd; ſo it oblig'd us to ſeek our Happineſs in ſomething elſe; ſomething agreeable to that new State, which this Corruption introduc'd. *Objection from the Fall,*

In anſwer to this, 'tis confeſs'd, the Corruption of our Nature makes it more difficult to obſerve its beſt Laws, and therefore more difficult to obtain our proper Happineſs: But the Reaſons of Good and Evil are ſtill the ſame, and our Happineſs and Miſery ſtill depend on 'em: If not, Why did God reinforce the Laws of Nature? Why did he improve their Obligation in the Goſpel? And if ſo, 'twill be no Advantage to ſubmit to that Corruption, and increaſe our Miſery, rather than take ſome Pains for Happineſs. But this Objection implies an Anſwer to it ſelf: For if the Corruption of our Nature has chang'd its true Happineſs, it muſt be acknowledg'd *Anſwer'd.*

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it has chang'd it for a worſe; for if not, this bold Abſurdity will follow, that we are more oblig'd to the Devil, than we are to God; becauſe the Alteration of our Nature by this Corruption, was the Contrivance of the Devil; and our Nature, in its State of Innocence, was the Work of God: And if it has chang'd it for a worſe, all Wickedneſs is hereby condemn'd, becauſe it will in Courſe increaſe that Corruption, and conſequently that Change, and ſo make our Happineſs ſtill worſe and worſe; *i. e.* make us more and more unhappy, or at leaſt, leſs unhappy than we might ſtill be: From whence it follows, that the moſt effectual way to make us as happy as we can be in this World, is a ſincere Obedience to God's Laws. But farther yet, this Change, inſtead of making Vices adminiſter to our Happineſs, has made 'em more fruitful of Miſery: Suppoſe the Vice Perſonal, the Infirmities of our Minds and Bodies, introduc'd by that Corruption, increaſe the Diſturbance it naturally gives: Suppoſe it Social, the Violence of the Paſſions and Reſentments of Mankind, proceeding from the ſame Cauſe, purſue it with more numerous Miſchiefs. On the contrary, the moſt difficult Duties, the greateſt Severities, ſoberly and judiciouſly obſerv'd, have their Uſes in this Life: They ſuppreſs thoſe Paſſions

Paſſions that would betray us into Evil, and by that Means recover ſome Degrees of the Perfection of our Nature; and in Proportion to that Recovery, our preſent Happineſs muſt be allow'd, upon the Principles already prov'd, to increaſe as we proceed.

The Prophet appeals to Mens own Judgments and Conſciences, and inſiſts for the Iſſue, on the Matter of their Duty; *What does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* He challenges their ſtrongeſt Prejudice to arraign any Part of God's Laws for uſeleſs Severities: He depends on it, nothing can be ſaid againſt the gracious Goodneſs of God in 'em; nothing prov'd inconſiſtent with the Happineſs of our Nature, or not well adapted to it; nothing ſaid to juſtify the Prudence of breaking 'em, or to palliate the Folly of doing our ſelves ſo much Miſchief. Micah 6. 8.

The Influence of Religion on Life.

The Goodneſs or Dignity of any Thing, is to be determin'd by the Nature of the End to which it ſerves: If therefore the Nature of religious Duties be ſuch, ſuch their End and Effect, as to proſecute and promote our Happineſs in both Worlds, they can want nothing to recommend 'em: No Man wants to be perſuaded to Happineſs, all are agred in that; the only Difference is, by what Means 'tis beſt purſued. It appears,

I hope,

I hope, reaſonable from what has been ſaid, to ſuppoſe our Creator the beſt Judge what Rules of Life are moſt proper for us, and to preſume that he would give us ſuch only, and not encumber Life by unneceſſary Grievances; and if we conſider Particulars, we ſhall find it ſo.

In general it protects the Mind. But we may obſerve firſt in general, That a Mind, form'd upon the Principles of Chriſtianity, is much better qualified to live in ſuch a World as this, than any other can be, much more than one that lives in an extemporary Life, and that too under the Confuſion of vicious Inclinations. Happineſs, in this Life, will depend as much upon the Thoughts, the Sentiments and Affections of the Mind, as upon Things themſelves. In both theſe Reſpects, Religion, as 'tis ſtated and urged by the Goſpel, has great Advantages in order to the Happineſs of this World; both as our Minds are diſpos'd by it not to be irregularly affected by Things external, and to affect us moſt happily themſelves by internal Reflections, when thoſe Chriſtian Principles have been faithfully purſued.

Fortitude. The proper Temper, with reſpect to external Things, has been heartily labour'd by the Stoicks, and not without ſome Succeſs; but they wanted the true Foundation: For want of this, they were forc'd upon nice ab-

abstracted Reasonings, which though often true, were not strong enough to bear the Shocks of so various a State as Human Life, confin'd within it self, or at best, having no certain or particular View of a future Immortality.

Our Faith, says St. *John*, overcomes the World; the Spirit of Christianity is the true Fortitude, the most rational and sure Magnanimity; and this cardinal Virtue is of eminent Use in Life; Men that are quite without it, are entirely at the Mercy of all Accidents: It may be consider'd as Natural, as a Felicity of Constitution, an Advantage in the Temperament of our Bodies, ministring to the Mind more faithfully and constantly: As such, it depends on Religion only for its Preservation: 'Tis destroy'd by a vicious and debauch'd Conversation; Lewdness and Intemperance ruin the Vivacity of Nature. It is likewise to be consider'd as Moral, as it is the Effect of a serious Enquiry into the Nature of Things, and an habitual Curb upon our Passions: And lastly, it may be consider'd as Spiritual, as it is the Gift of God, not altogether Human; but such an Improvement upon the Human Soul, as that Soul it self is upon the Human Body, giving Life to it, and Strength to defend it self.

Effect of Faith.

In this Mortal Life, the Body will have some Influence on the Soul, and for that Reason

Fortitude natural.

Reaſon it is of great Moment to have it well diſpoſed, well temper'd between Stupidity on the one Hand, and too eager an Apprehenſion on the other: The former is the Strength of a Brute, the latter the Weakneſs of a Man; in a juſt Proportion of each conſiſts Human Fortitude, conſider'd as a natural Perfection.

Moral. The true Value of this, conſiſts in helping us to eſtabliſh the Moral; and this is continually wanted: As many Evils as are incident to Human Life, and capable of giving us Diſturbance in it, and as many as there are Objects that can appear deſirable or capable of contributing to our Happineſs, ſo many Occaſions may we have for it. It is neceſſary to protect us, not only againſt the Severities of Life, but againſt its Indulgencies too; not only to enable us to bear the Proſpects of ſuch Hardſhips as we are expoſed to in it, but the Hardſhips themſelves if they become our Portion; and likewiſe, which is perhaps the more difficult Part, to receive the Luſtre of all the Hopes it ſhows us in this World with undazzled Eyes and ſteady Hearts; and to poſſeſs the Things themſelves, if allotted us, with Sobriety and Equanimity, without being over paſſionately affected, without flying out into unmannerly Gaieties, or into Pride and Wantonneſs. If we examine Life in its ſeveral Degrees and Characters,

racters, we ſhall find that much the greateſt Part of its Uneaſineſs proceeds from the Want of this Virtue: On the other hand, it is not a ſullen Contempt of Life; the Chriſtian knows it is of great Uſe, capable of being improved to great Advantages; nor is it a moroſe, unſociable Averſion to the Concerns of this World; theſe, he knows, may be moralized by a well-diſpoſed Mind. As the trueſt Courage is obſerved to be leaſt litigious, as being moſt impatient of a diſhonourable Retreat, and beſt compoſed to form a right Judgment of Provocations; ſo the trueſt Fortitude is that which is not always quarreling with the Infirmities and Imperfections of Life; but it is a rational Patience under them, and ſuch a judicious Conduct as keeps us from engaging too far, from reſigning too much to our Senſes, our Prejudices and our Paſſions; and ſo protects us from Interruptions and Diſturbances in the proper Buſineſs of our Being; and from ſuch Confuſion as keeps Nature in continual Convulſions, panting after ſomething that is fancy'd neceſſary, or trembling at ſomething apprehended terrible; always purſuing ſomething or flying from it; never ſettled in any worthy Meaſures, never compoſed enough for actual or preſent Happineſs; never at Leiſure to enjoy or improve what it is poſſeſſed of, but laying that aſide as abſolutely

in its Power, to be enjoy'd or improv'd at any Time, it expoſes it ſelf to new Dangers for the Sake of new Conqueſts; but in the mean Time inſiſts on its Diſappointments and Affections, and aggravates every one of them by a ſtudied Eloquence in complaining. This Weakneſs is the true Cauſe of the greateſt Part of the Diſcontents of Mankind; and the Miſery that attends it, is uſually the ſame in all Orders of Men; for that depends not on the real Value of Things themſelves, but on their relative or imaginary Dignity; on the Proportion they bear to Men's Deſires, the Moment they are of to them, the Superſcription they receive: Would Men conſider the true Dignity of their Nature, and not ſubject it to Temporal and Circumſtantial Dependencies, more than their Infirmities and Imperfections make neceſſary, their preſent Happineſs would not be ſo precarious as it is. To aſſert the Dignity of our Nature, and ſtand firm againſt the frequent Shocks of Life, this is moral Fortitude, a Leſſon only to be learned from the New Teſtament, becauſe that alone informs us of that Dignity; that alone directs us to a Steadineſs of Heart, that purſues the proper Buſineſs of Life, uncorrupted by Bribes or Threats; as a ſtrong Brain purſues the Truth it has in View, diſregarding the Variety of Ob-

jects that would divert it, and uninterrupted by accidental Noiſes.

And as the natural Fortitude is a great Advantage in forming the Moral, the Moral is as great a Help towards eſtabliſhing the Spiritual; and that is the moſt powerful Protection we can have in Life. When a Man is advanced from Human Prudence to Chriſtian Zeal, from a rational Care of his Nature to a Spiritual Concern for its Perfection, he will not be frighted or deluded out of ſo glorious a Proſpect: If the Glories of the World are offer'd him as the Rewards of Iniquity, he can look on them with Pleaſure, but conſiders them only as ſo many Ornaments in his Triumph over it: He has only rectify'd not ſtupify'd his Senſes, only civiliz'd and not deſtroy'd his Paſſions, he is therefore as conſcious there may be ſome preſent Pleaſure in indulging them, as the Libertine himſelf; but to that he oppoſes others, to which the Libertine is a Stranger, the lively, laſting, ſubſtantial Pleaſures of Reaſon and Religion. On theſe he fixes his Soul, and they mutually improve each other. He pays all reaſonable Deference to the Judgments and Perſuaſions of other Men, he does not in general diſregard their Authority, he does not think their Hatred or Love, their Contempt or good Eſteem, their Favours or Malice indifferent; he therefore don't willingly give *Spiritual.*

juſt Offence, he provokes no reaſonable Reſentments; but when Piety and Virtue become Crimes, he reſolutely perſiſts in them; he is not diſcouraged by their being unfaſhionable, he will not be influenc'd by the Miſrepreſentations of the World; he fixes his Mind on the main End of Life, and determines the Weight and Importance of particular Occurrences, by the Influence they have on that; and that End is to him ſo great a Bleſſing, that he cannot be perſuaded to lament himſelf as miſerable in any Circumſtances, when he knows he is in the direct Way to perfect Happineſs. And this End determines the real Moment of all External Parts of Life, its Advantages and Diſadvantages, the real Good and Evil that attends them, which in his Breaſt are made to ſubmit to it; and his Familiarity with this End, prevents too ſtrict a Dependance on the preſent Poſture of his Being; he keeps his Mind from being too abſolutely engaged where there is ſo little Certainty, and fixes it the more ſteadily on Piety and Virtue, which he knows will form him to laſting Happineſs. He knows all Parts of External Life are fleeting, and all is to him External Life that don't contribute to the Improvement of his Soul. Such Improvements he knows can't be too much valued, becauſe they will follow him to the other World: But he thinks ſuch Hopes and Fears,

ſuch Deſires and Averſions as terminate in this Life, have too much Uncertainty, and too much Confuſion in them, for the Soul of Man to reſt on.

If we ſet our Hearts on the true End of Life, this is ſomething certain and conſtant; whatever Alterations happen in the Outward Circumſtances of it, the Soul that has been thus fixed, is never at a Loſs; ſhe has always a ſure Refuge; ſomething the Mind of Man muſt have to reſt on: And whoever conſiders how often, and how ſuddenly the Face of this World changes; how often our Levity and Childiſh Joy is converted in an Inſtant into ſullen Sorrow, and made aſhamed of it ſelf by Surprizes, will not deliberately conclude that a proper Reſt. But when the Soul is not ſo happy as to be directed by a Religious Education to its true Intereſt, to the real and ſincere Friends and Promoters of its Happineſs, it then ſtrengthens it ſelf in its Wickedneſs, and will ſoon become ſenſible of its Miſery.

Such a Man can't be unhappy.

But the Man that has ſet his Heart upon the true End of Life, as it has been explained to him by Chriſtianity, can never be unhappy, becauſe the Means to that End are always in his Hands, and to ſuppoſe the End it ſelf can make him unhappy, is groſs Blaſphemy. On the other Hand, the Soul that fixes on the Circumſtances

A Secular Spirit.

of this World for its Happineſs, is continually expoſed to innumerable Uncertainties; nothing is abſolutely at her Command; ſhe is at the Command of every thing; continually hurry'd backwards and forwards, as the Hopes and Fears, Flatteries and Terrors of Life offer themſelves, either to fright or tempt her; and the Affections raiſed by theſe, hang like Fevers on her, continually weakning her, by making her reſtleſs, and hot, and eager, with vain Apprehenſions and Prejudices, with a Succeſſion of Vexatious Imaginations, inconſiderable perhaps in themſelves as fleeting Shadows. The faithful Chriſtian is excuſed all this, and not expoſed by his Religion to any one Uneaſineſs in Life; he does not inſiſt on being diſtinguiſhed by Providence, but he muſt be allowed as good a Title as other Men to whatever is indeed a Bleſſing; and he has great Advantages in the Enjoyment of it: He does not labour under the Slavery of Vicious Minds, the fatiguing Commands of Vicious Habits, thoſe arbitrary and cruel Maſters, ſometimes urging Contradictions, and not giving way to each other without violent Contentions. He feels none of thoſe Convulſions that ſhake the Hearts of reſtleſs and diſcontented Men, ſtruggling with Avarice and Malice, with Envy and Injuſtice, grappling with all the Troubles they bring, and even fighting a-

The Heavenly.

gainſt

gainſt God himſelf. He ſatisfies the Wants of Nature, but makes no new ones; he diſcharges the Duties of Life with a chearful Mind, he underſtands its Value and treats it accordingly; but his Heart is fixed on Heaven, the great End of his Creation, and he places the Value of his Life in being a Means to it: He knows that the true Perfection of Man conſiſts in the Faculties of his Soul; that all External Deſires and Enjoyments are ſo many Inſtances, ſo many Proofs of his Infirmities and Imperfections: He ſubmits to the Services theſe require, but he places the Honour, and Happineſs, and Improvement of Life in Religion; and having ſpent his Days in humble Peace and Piety, he retires to his Grave, till his Maker ſhall call him from it, and ſettle him in a State that ſhall know no Imperfections.

Such the Spirit of Chriſtianity.

Both Infidels and Chriſtians, how wicked ſoever, muſt own this is the Spirit of Chriſtianity; they muſt own great Weight is laid in the New Teſtament upon refining the Affections, and ſpiritualizing Nature. And though perhaps wicked Chriſtians may be unwilling to ſign ſo plain a Condemnation of themſelves, yet I believe few Infidels would ſcruple to own, that could Chriſtianity be ſuppoſed an evident Truth, ſuch a Proſpect, ſuch a Foundation, and in

Conſequence of it, ſuch a Spirit, would be a great Advantage in Life.

The Importance of Conſcience. But this General Argument for a faithful Conformity to Chriſtianity, among the Profeſſors of it, ſhould be carry'd farther: It ſhould be carry'd to the Influence which their own Minds have, in the Reflections they make on their Conduct. Many Repreſentations in Scripture, and many Inſtances within our own Obſervation may convince us, That our Conſciences are of great Importance in the Happineſs of this preſent Life; and this Importance ariſes from the Repreſentations which Chriſtianity gives us of the other World: *The Spirit of a Man will ſuſtain his Infirmity, but a wounded Spirit is it ſelf intolerable.* This Infidels may laugh at, but Chriſtians, who only ward it off by a preſent Careleſneſs and Indolence, are more concerned to conſider it. The Importance of Life, an Eternity of Happineſs or Miſery depending on it, fix'd upon the Soul by a full Aſſurance of Faith, gives to the Conſcience a Sovereign Power and Influence, which in good Chriſtians is conſtant, and in wicked ones not uncommon. We have an eminent Example of each in the Old Teſtament. The Strength of a good Conſcience was ſhown in *Job*, expoſed to all the Malice of Hell. The Devil well underſtood the Infirmtiy of Human Nature; he knew

Job.

how

how to apply himſelf to its moſt tender Parts; he executed his Commiſſion with the utmoſt Severity; no Checks of Compaſſion interrupted him, and accordingly, no part of Nature was left unprovok'd. But notwithſtanding all this, when the firſt Convulſion was over, *Job* was contented under it, becauſe he knew that his Redeemer liv'd, and that in his Fleſh he ſhould ſee God. That Body which was now the Sport of Devils, he knew would, one Day, be the Company of Angels. If we take theſe Words in the loweſt Senſe, ſo as to give 'em no Relation to a future State; if we underſtand 'em only, with regard to his Aſſurance of being reſtor'd by God to his Health and Proſperity, which ſome chuſe to do; in this Senſe, they ſhow the powerful Influence of a good Conſcience; an Influence that produc'd ſo much Satisfaction in ſuch Circumſtances.

How different from this, was the Caſe of *David*; his Injuſtice and Barbarity to *Uriah*, fairly repreſented by a ſerious Reflection, perſecuted his Mind with the moſt diſmal Apprehenſions: In the midſt of the Pomps and Glories of a Court, nothing could divert him from the Thoughts of his Guilt, nothing could ſcreen him from the Terrors of the Lord: And thoſe Terrors ſo effectually humbled him, that he was better pleas'd upon his Knees, an humble Penitent, David.

nitent, and Supplicant for Mercy, than when he was receiving the Addreſſes of others on his Throne.

A good Conſcience a powerful Support.

So powerfully does Conſcience either comfort or torment us; and in ſuch a World, and ſuch Inhabitants, this Comfort is an ineſtimable Treaſure. Enthuſiaſts in Philoſophy may tell us, that a wiſe Man is diſturb'd at nothing; they may declaim upon the Folly of grieving, when we can neither prevent nor cure; but Experience convinces us we can't lay aſide Humanity; and not only ſo, but are griev'd the more on that Conſideration, that we have no proſpect of Relief. Nothing therefore can ſuſtain us in ſuch Caſes, but a Religious Spirit; a Conſcience that not only aſſures in particular Severities, that we have not done any Thing to bring 'em on our ſelves, but ſpeaks Peace to the Soul, with reſpect to the great End of her Creation, the Deſign of Life in general, whatever Interruptions may happen, to make her way to it more troubleſome: A good Conſcience, in ſingle Inſtances, has its proportionable Satisfaction, but this is far ſhort of the Comforts of an univerſal Review, as far as the Luſtre of a ſingle Star falls ſhort of a glittering Sky; ſuch a Conſcience effectually ſuſtains a Man's Infirmities, whatever they may be: It either aſſures him his Misfortunes, of what kind ſoever, are not inflicted as Judgments, or

Under Misfortunes,

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at leaſt, that he is not caſt out of God's Favour; that God propoſes ſome good Uſe of his Sufferings: When Afflictions repreſent to us the Indignation of God, when they come arm'd with the Vengeance of Heaven, human Nature is too weak, and too guilty to bear 'em: But when they are conſider'd as proceeding not from God's Juſtice, but his Wiſdom, ſuch a Man ſubmits implicitly to his Maker's Counſels, contented that his Life's employ'd in his Service, though hard and wearifome: He ſuppreſſes the Tumults of Grief; his Paſſions are not allow'd to run to any Exceſs of Riot; he does not lament his being ſubject to the Infirmities of human Life, no more than he laments that he's not an Angel. *As not Judgments.*

Nay, farther, if ſuch a Man does look upon Misfortunes, not as the common Portion of human Life, nor as the ordinary Diſpenſations of Providence, but as the immediate Commands and Judgments of God, yet his Conſcience ſupports him under 'em; he knows he's far from Perfection, and may therefore deſerve, and want to be chaſtiſed; and he receives ſuch Judgments as the neceſſary Frowns, as the unwilling Corrections of a careful Father. This is frequently the Method by which God reclaims ſome Irregularities in good Men, ſuch Irregularities as might otherwiſe ſettle into vicious Habits; and by being uncorrected, have a dange- *As Judgments.*

dangerous Influence on the general Conduct of their Lives: Such Diſcipline is uſually repreſented under the Character of Misfortunes, and 'twill at firſt have the Smart of 'em too; but if it produces the peaceable Fruits of Righteouſneſs, 'twill be the Subject of happy Reflections, and abundantly recompenſe his Grief: When the moſt ſevere Strokes of Providence are taken in this Senſe, though we may naturally be uneaſy under the preſent Smart, we ſhall be far from the Condition of a wounded Spirit.

It aſſures us of eternal Happineſs, the great Point.

And how great ſoever this Uneaſineſs may at firſt be, a good Conſcience will aſſuage it: 'Twill aſſure us, that however we may at preſent be diſturb'd, the great Deſign of all, our eternal Happineſs, is ſecur'd; we know we can't long be confin'd to this Vale of Tears; our Afflictions themſelves haſten our Diſcharge; the more ſevere, the more violent they are, the faſter they wear out thoſe Bands, that keep together Soul and Body; and when they are worn out, the Soul will return with Speed and Joy to him that gave it: Theſe Conſiderations ſoften very much the greateſt Hardſhips of Life. This Dependance on a future Happineſs, ſupported the Primitive Chriſtians under the moſt induſtrious Cruelties of their Enemies: This enabled 'em to bear the ſevereſt Torments, and with ſo little Concern,

Primitive Examples.

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it might ſeem doubtful, whether they were in or out of the Body: They look'd upon thoſe Flames that were prepar'd to conſume 'em, with as little Confuſion, as if they were but painted; they embrac'd wild Beaſts as their Friends; they receiv'd their Fury as a forward Zeal, to deliver 'em from the Imperfections of Life, and from the Power of their more ſavage Perſecutors.

Such was then the Influence of a good Conſcience, and ſuch it may ſtill be; they were Men of like Paſſions with us, and we have the ſame God and the ſame Heaven to depend on.

A wounded Spirit ruins all the Happineſs of Life.

On the other Hand, the Influence of a wounded Spirit is full as ſtrong; it makes a Man nauſeate the beſt Enjoyments of Life: Every Bleſſing he's poſſeſs'd of, inſtead of diverting his Affliction, and calming his Mind, is turn'd into an Argument againſt him; it reproaches him for his Ingratitude to that God that gave it. This is ſo natural a Reflection, that a Sinner humbled by Afflictions, or interrupted in the Gaiety of his Vices, can't help making it: When he's ſenſible of his Dependance on God, his Obligations to him will make themſelves conſider'd, and appear in a very different Aſpect from that they us'd to wear.

A Man that has a ſear'd Conſcience, and the Enjoyments of the World at Command, may

may perhaps conclude, 'tis Folly to disturb himself with Matters of Religion, to spoil those Pleasures that he might enjoy: But a wounded Spirit is too tender to be so roughly treated, and too importunate to be so easily put off: Instead of being amus'd by the Enjoyments of the World, it feels new Pains and smarts the more: In these it sees the Goodness of God, and the Obligations it was under to make some Returns, and then reflects upon it self with double Confusion: 'Tis sensible 'twas a vicious Fondness for those that brought it into that miserable State, and therefore they can't be thought on without Disturbance: Madmen rave afresh at the Sight or Thought of the Cause of their Destruction.

Aggravates Afflictions.

And as such a Mind is disqualify'd for the Pleasures of Life, 'tis likewise a severe Aggravation of Afflictions; whether they proceed from our natural Infirmities, or from outward Misfortunes. Our natural Infirmities, by the Afflictions they bring on us, put us in mind of our Mortality; and how careless soever we have been before, the Thoughts of another World will then crowd in upon our Hearts; and the Wounds of Conscience, added to the Pangs of Nature, must make such a Composition of Misery, as none but those that have felt it can conceive. It is probably one of the great Artifices of the Devil, and the great-

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eſt Difficulty he meets with, to keep wicked Men from the Thoughts of Death; but when Afflictions, how natural ſoever, have put 'em upon thinking; when they diſpoſe 'em to be ſerious, and repreſent to 'em the Importance and Certainty of Death; in this Caſe, if their Conſcience condemns 'em, if it brings all the Wickedneſs of their Lives in Judgment before 'em, if it produces the Laws of God againſt 'em, and tells 'em, that as the Righteouſneſs of their Judge is incorruptible, ſo is his Knowledge univerſal and infallible; under theſe Thoughts, the Afflictions they began with, are the leaſt part of their Sufferings.

If our Afflictions proceed from outward Misfortunes, theſe caſt a Damp upon the Gaiety of the brickeſt Temper; they leſſen our Fondneſs of the World, and inſtead of that, give us an ill Opinion of all its Pretences, and thus leave us at a Loſs for Happineſs. And if our Condition be ſuch, that when we come to ſeek it without our ſelves, we find nothing there but Guilt, Deſpair and Miſery; if our Misfortunes and our Conſciences prove mutual Aggravations, and torment us with united Force, Where ſhall we apply for Reſt to our Souls? Happineſs, of one kind or other, is naturally deſir'd by all Rational Spirits: The Corruption of human Nature, has introduc'd great Abſurdities in Men's Purſuit of it; it has per-

perſuaded 'em to expect it from Things deſtructive, Things that delude 'em with ſome Compliance to their preſent Humour, but ſoon convince 'em of their Folly: However, as long as ſuch Deluſions ſucceed each other, and keep off the Anguiſh of ſuch Conviction, ſo long they may keep the Soul in Heart. But when Life it ſelf is overcaſt with Melancholy and Deſpair, when all probable Preſumptions are vaniſh'd, when the Devil himſelf will not ſo much as flatter us with Happineſs, when neither this World, nor the other, affords us any Proſpect of it, ſuch a Condition is miſerable beyond Deſcription.

Frights us with the moſt intolerable of all Evils.

Laſtly, A wounded Spirit frights us with the moſt intolerable of all Evils, and naturally drives us to Deſpair: Exceſſive Torments in this Life are ſoon over, Nature can't bear 'em long: Theſe corruptible Bodies are deſtroy'd by Extremity of Pain, but a guilty Conſcience condemns us to a State, in which it will not be ſo well with us; in which we can't be reliev'd by Death; with ſuch a Proſpect it overwhelms us, and immediately extinguiſhes the leaſt Hopes of Deliverance, as faſt as they can kindle in the Soul.

A wounded Spirit ſeldom contents it ſelf with ſtrict Truth; they who perſuaded themſelves before, that there was no Danger,

ger, are apt, in the Bitterneſs of their Souls, to conclude themſelves paſt Recovery. 'Tis an uſual Weakneſs in human Nature, to be carry'd from one Extream to t'other; it requires Judgment and Calmneſs to ſettle between 'em. A Soul under ſuch Confuſion of Reflections and Fears, is ſeldom ſo happy as to diſengage it ſelf without more Affliction than is abſolutely neceſſary. It too often repreſents God under all the Terror of incens'd Majeſty, implacably reſolv'd on its Deſtruction; and under ſuch Apprehenſions, what Room can there be for any Sort of Happineſs? Such is the uſual Influence of Conſcience on human Life, ariſing from the Principles of Chriſtianity, which makes it neceſſary to our preſent Happineſs, that we ſhould conform to the gracious Purpoſe of God in all his Revelations. Such is the Spirit to which the Goſpel educates its Diſciples, that it fortifies our Hearts againſt the Inſults and Impoſitions of Life, under the Protection of which, we may paſs peaceably through this World, with our Eyes and Hearts fix'd upon the other.

CHAP. II.

The Conſtituent Parts of Religion.

WHen we are brought to this Temper, we ſhall ſee Reaſon enough to recommend the Practice of Religion in all its Parts; we ſhall bleſs God for the Wiſdom and Clemency of his Government; we ſhall be ſenſible of the many Advantages of a Godly, Righteous, and Sober Life; a devout and humble Spirit, with reſpect to God; a conſcientious Behaviour in all our Concerns with Men; a regular and rational Conduct of our own Minds and Bodies.

Tit. 2. 12. This is St. *Paul's* Diviſion of a Chriſtian's Duty; and ſuch Duty is certainly moſt unexceptionable. The Prophet *Micah* divides ſomething different, but ſo, that he may properly be underſtood to include the ſame Things; *What does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* The Prophet, under Juſtice may properly deſign to comprehend all the Duties that we owe to

Micah 6. 8.

to our own Minds and Bodies, for all of 'em are ſtrictly Acts of Juſtice to our ſelves; and the Apoſtle, under Righteouſneſs, may probably intend, not only mere Juſtice to other Men, but Charity and Kindneſs too; This Senſe it bears in the Character of *Joſeph.* Matth. 1. 19.

Our Duty to God, conſider'd diſtinctly, with reſpect to himſelf only, conſiſts in a Reverend Contemplation of his Nature, in Devout Applications in the ſeveral Parts of Worſhip, and in putting our Truſt in him alone. Contemplation is the firſt Step we take in walking with God; and this we cannot too often repeat. 'Tis a natural Homage, which all created Underſtandings are oblig'd to pay him; and in proportion to the Degrees in which 'tis enjoy'd, not encumber'd by Terror from a Conſciouſneſs of our own Impiety, 'tis the moſt Pure, the moſt Rational, the moſt Satisfactory Entertainment; and the uſeful Improvement it makes in human Minds, is equal to the Entertainment it affords 'em: The more diſtinctly they apprehend God's Perfections, and the more they are affected by 'em, the more is their Underſtanding enrich'd, and their Will purify'd; which, in ſuch a Life as this, is of the laſt Importance: A Life, in which our Senſes are apt to overwhelm all uſeful Thoughts; and their Importunity apt to prevail with us to deny 'em no Gra-

Our Duty to God.

Contemplating his Perfections.

tifications. In God we ſee every Virtue in Perfection; and the ſerious Contemplation of ſuch a Nature, will fix our Reverence, our Love and Fear, our Gratitude and Devotion; we cannot chuſe but fall down and Worſhip ſo much Majeſty and Goodneſs, ſo much Wiſdom, Juſtice and Power, ſo agreeably, ſo harmoniouſly united: This is a natural Conſequence, from our Contemplation of God, which is it ſelf the moſt Spiritual Adoration.

Divine Worſhip. This will diſpoſe us for the ſecond Advance we are to make in our Duty to God, an acceptable Performance of Divine Worſhip; in which we expreſs our Reverence, the Senſe we have of his Perfections, and the Benefits we have receiv'd from him, and make our Application for ſuch Mercies as our Happineſs depends on. Having conſider'd the Influence of Divine Worſhip, in Chap. 11. the former Part of this Book, I ſhall be ſomewhat the more general here.

Devotion. The moſt intimate Motion of the Heart towards God, is like drawing ſo much nearer to the Sun; and as we are at preſent diſpos'd, we find, by Experience, outward Circumſtances will have ſome Influence on us; and therefore a ſuitable Expreſſion of our Thoughts, gives 'em new Force. Being thus ſent out, they return to the Heart, enrich'd with more Devotion, whoſe Merchandize

chandize is better than Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold: And the Improvement is greater ſtill, when a Congregation of Saints unite; when their Devotions, though but as Sparks when ſeparate, riſe thus united in Flames to Heaven.

Devotion, whether Publick or Private, raiſes the Mind above the Infirmities of this mortal State; it does, in a manner, remove it to Heaven, without the Pangs of a Diſſolution; and when 'tis thus exalted, it looks down upon the Pleaſures and Amuſements of the World, with a Manly Rational Contempt: It perceives 'twas at other times too cloſely engag'd, too much concern'd for 'em, to underſtand 'em right; Things plac'd too near our Eyes, are never ſeen diſtinctly, they always appear greater than they are. And as Devotion calls off the Soul from the Prejudices it had formerly indulg'd, it does proportionably recover the Perfection of our Nature; and in Proportion to this Recovery, our Happineſs muſt of Neceſſity increaſe.

Petition. To beg Favours of God, cannot certainly be ſcrupled; Men cannot be ſo inſolent as to inſiſt on it, that Omnipotence ſhould watch and miniſter to their Wants unſollicited; neither can they be ſo ſullen as to want ſtill, rather than condeſcend to ask: They cannot heſitate on it, as a Point of Honour not to be ſo much oblig'd to Hea-

ven: We can't ſuſpect any ſuch Complaints againſt this Duty; a Duty never deny'd the Divine Character, but upon a Principle more diſgraceful to it, than direct Defiance, ſuppoſing it too much Trouble to attend the Buſineſs of the World. And if we conſider the natural Influence of its ſolemn Practice, we ſhall find it very advantageous; nothing tends more to correct the Irregularities of our Minds, our falſe Averſions, and falſe Deſires. Attention it ſelf, though retir'd and unobſerv'd by others, frequently diſcovers inveterate Errors: But Attention is never ſo attentive, as when we expreſs our Thoughts, and eſpecially when we expreſs 'em to ſuch as command Eſteem and Reverence; and in our Addreſſes to God, all theſe Advantages concur. Such Abſurdities as had paſs'd our more indifferent Reflections, when they come to be review'd and explain'd in ſuch a Preſence, ſtrike the Soul with Surprize and Horror. God is frequently deſcrib'd by Light, and Iniquities as the Works of Darkneſs; and 'tis certain, Good and Evil, Truth and Falſhood, can never be ſo juſtly diſtinguiſh'd any other way, as by being brought to him. It has indeed been obſerv'd by a Heathen, with an honeſt Severity, as the monſtrous Impiety of that Age, "That ſome whiſper'd in the Ears of "their Gods, what they were aſham'd Men "ſhould hear:" But ſuch are out of the reach of Reaſon, and are no more Objections

ctions to any natural Rule, than other Monſters are allow'd to be.

As for the other Branch of this Duty, Thankſgiving, the Senſe which all Men have of Ingratitude, will doubtleſs protect this from all Remonſtrances. If any one be inclin'd to think it a Burden, and regret the Obligation in his Heart, let him reflect on himſelf, how would that Heart ſwell with Reſentments, ſhould thoſe, who have depended on him for their Subſiſtence, or their Being; thoſe to whom he has been a Foſter, or a Natural Father, treat him with Neglect, ſhould they ſcorn to own themſelves oblig'd to him; and then let him conſider how much Creation and Providence exceed all human Obligations. But to recommend this Duty to the Affections of Mankind, we may inſiſt with the Pſalmiſt, *'Tis a joyful and pleaſant thing to be thankful.* 'Tis true, the Votary muſt be ſuppos'd Virtuous and Religious; 'tis impoſſible a Man that is not ſo, can take any Pleaſure in any Application to God: And particularly for a Man that's conſcious he has got his Riches, or other Enjoyments, by Fraud or Violence, by Covetouſneſs or Oppreſſion; for ſuch a Man to apply himſelf in a formal Thankſgiving to Heaven, would be to inſult God, and deride his Providence: Inſtead of taking Pleaſure in doing it, he muſt probably tremble, in a juſt *Thankſgiving.*

Expectation of immediate Vengeance. God is the univerſal Proprietor of the World, and therefore no Man, who has got the Advantages of Life unjuſtly, will ever think of this Duty, no more than a Thief would thank the Owner for the Goods he had ſtolen from him. But when a Man is not terrify'd from appearing before God by a guilty Conſcience, when his Conſcience bears him Witneſs, that the Advantages he enjoys, are the Gifts and Bleſſings of God's Favour: In this Caſe, every Time he offers up his Praiſes and Thanks for 'em, he enjoys 'em afreſh, and with a peculiar Satisfaction.

Truſt in God. Another general Duty that we owe to God, is truſting in him. And it muſt be acknowledg'd highly reaſonable, that the independent Sovereign of the World, the ſole Creator, ſhould inſiſt on this Duty; that he ſhould make Men ſenſible of their Baſeneſs and Folly, in transferring their Allegiance to his Creatures, or calling in their Aſſiſtance, as if he had not an entire Right to it, or were not ſufficient to ſuſtain the important Charge of their Protection.

And as it is reaſonable, 'tis likewiſe the beſt Foundation for the Comfort and Satisfaction of the Soul: As the Power of Men's Patrons is leſſen'd, their Intereſt and Hopes muſt be leſſen'd too; and when we deſcend

deſcend from abſolute Perfection, we know not how many Infirmities there may be, any one of which may fruſtrate all their Expectations. But when we devote our ſelves to our faithful Creator, we may depend on him with a full Aſſurance of Faith for all the Concerns of our Being; and nothing can be more comfortable than ſuch a Dependance, eſpecially to Creatures in the Condition of Mankind, beſet with Dangers and Uncertainties.

The laſt Duty, which the Prophet expreſſes by Humility with reſpect to God, and the Apoſtle in a more general Name repreſents as Reverence or Submiſſion, this is of Sovereign Influence upon all the reſt; they may poſſibly be all performed in ſuch a Manner, as neither to contribute to God's Honour, nor our own Advantage: *Walking humbly with God*, an abſolute Reſignation, an awful Senſe of our Relation to him, this is the moſt difficult Doctrine in all Religion; but it is of Uſe equal to its Difficulty: It regulates our Conduct with Regard to God's Nature, with Regard to his Providence, and with Regard to his Religious Inſtitutions. What Confuſion has not Pride been able to introduce into Men's Conduct with regard to every one of theſe? The Want of an humble Reverence for God, has at various Times robbed him of all his Perfections, raiſed Mutinies againſt his

Reverence or Humility towards God.

his Providence, and turn'd the moſt ſolemn Parts of Religion into inſolent Affronts.

How this is neceſſary in order to all Duties to him.

The Contemplation of God's Nature to an inſolent Mind muſt be uneaſy: If it appears in its true Majeſty and Perfection, it immediately gives this mortifying Reflection; To this Nature, all that is valuable in mine is to be referr'd; this Glorious Being made me what I am, and might, if he had pleaſed, have made me an Ideot, made my Soul uſeleſs, or deny'd it quite. Such Thoughts muſt overcome Human Pride, or that Pride muſt expel ſuch Thoughts; they are utterly inconſiſtent; they can't dwell long in the ſame Breaſt. If after ſome Struggles, the Inſolence of ſuch a Man prevails, as it is to be feared it will, he will for the future ſhun God, as one to whom he is too much indebted to diſcharge his Obligations, and too proud to own them.

1. *With Reſpect to his Nature.*

On the contrary, where an humble Mind engages in this Religious Exerciſe, every Part of God's Nature is ſo much more amiable to it, as its own Obligation and Dependencies appear greater. This produces an univerſal Solicitude and Caution to avoid whatever might offend him, and an habitual Concern to conform all Parts of our Behaviour to his Will, which is the general End of all Religious Applications; and where it is well ſettled, it is a faithful Guard againſt

againſt all Dangers, and a continual Improvement of the Soul.

It may poſſibly be rejected as a heavy Load upon Life. But as this Charge againſt it is unreaſonable, as it is unnatural to think that Duty too troubleſome, which preſerves the Happineſs of all Parts of Nature, ſo it is likewiſe falſe. The Thoughts are ſo quick in their Application, eſpecially of ſuch Principles as we are uſed frequently to think of; that it can be no Trouble to recollect our Reverence for God, whenever we are beſet by Temptations: 'Tis true, all Things are not equally plain; it may ſometimes be made a ſerious Queſtion, Whether what is propoſed be indeed unlawful? But this can hardly happen ſo often as to be any Burden upon Life, and will certainly happen the ſeldomer, the more we are eſtabliſhed in this Humility. As a juſt Senſe of God's Nature tends to diſperſe all ſuperſtitious Scruples, ſo where one Man is betray'd into them by a Weakneſs of Judgment, many will probably be preſerved from them by worthy Thoughts of God: And when ſome of them happen to prevail, and become more uneaſy by being joyn'd with this Humility, that Uneaſineſs is abundantly recompenſed by its protecting them from all Things evidently Vicious: The Rocks on which Human Nature gene-

Not hard in it ſelf.

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rally ſplits, for want of being guided by this Regard for God.

2. With Reſpect to his Providence.

With Regard to Providence, this Humility ſecures a dutiful Government of our Thoughts under its various Diſpenſations. It directs us to conſider, what Bleſſings we enjoy as the gracious Effects of God's Goodneſs: It will not allow us to conſider them as our Right, to think on them as what we were in Courſe to expect; as if God obliged himſelf in creating us, to make ſuch Proviſion for us, as our own Humour ſhould dictate: It will not ſuffer us to inſiſt on any Perſonal Accompliſhments, as a ſufficient Title to ſuch Diſtinction. If any ſuch Thoughts ariſe, it ſoon quaſhes them, by repreſenting thoſe Accompliſhments the Effect of God's Goodneſs, and as ſuch, freſh Obligations on us.

If it pleaſes God to aſſign us the Diſadvantages or Severities of Life, it will not preſume to think on them as Injuries; it inclines us to conſider them with the ſame Reverence with which we conſider his Providence in General: To impute the Peculiarities of our own Condition, to ſome very juſtifiable though inviſible Reaſons, Reaſons wiſely concerted by God, though not viſible to any Human Underſtanding; or perhaps, viſible enough to others, but concealed from us by our Partiality for our ſelves. God permits us to reaſon with him

of

of his Judgments, but not to reflect undutifully on them: We may exerciſe our Reaſon on them, but not our Paſſions. In all Queſtions of this Kind, we muſt proceed as in the Search of a certain Truth, only to find out the particular Proofs of it, free from all Suſpicion of Falſhood. We are to fix upon the End at firſt, to enquire only into the Means that lead to it, fully aſſur'd they are both juſt and proper, and only examining how they came to be ſo; and if we can give our ſelves no Account at all of God's Diſpenſations, we are ſtill to remember they are his. We may often ſee good Reaſons for them, either from the Order of the World, which will not permit an Equality of Conditions among Men, or from our Minds or Bodies, which perhaps could not be excuſed what they ſuffer without a Miracle, or perhaps, want ſuch Diſcipline to regulate and correct them. But whatever unaccountable Severities we feel, this Humility will ſuppreſs all mutinous Thoughts, and diſpoſe us to refer all to God's Wiſdom.

3. *With Reſpect to his Inſtitutions.*

The laſt happy Influence of this Duty, is its oppoſing the firſt Motions of ſpiritual Pride, the moſt unnatural, and yet the moſt inſinuating Pride that can enter into the Heart of any rational Creature. As God is the moſt powerful Being, his Favour is moſt valuable; and from hence perhaps we

we are too forward to congratulate our ſelves upon any thing that we confuſedly ſuppoſe obliges him.

So far is any Religious Service from giving us any juſt Grounds for Pride with Reſpect to God, that it is indeed a new Reaſon for our praiſing his Goodneſs to us: Inſtead of looking up to Heaven with an Air of Arrogance after the Performance of the moſt ſolemn Devotions, we ought rather to fall down again upon our Knees, and thank him for that Opportunity of performing them.

And as to any Moral Virtues (without leſſening their Importance) what Appearance of Reaſon can there be, for inſiſting on them as Obligations upon God? If we act according to our Nature, we ſhall be ſo much the more happy; if we do not, he can't become leſs happy than he is: We ought therefore to bleſs him for ſuch a Nature, and ſuch Duties, as mutually recommend and ſupport each other; and impute our Virtues to him, not as his Debts, but ours. Not as our performing 'em gives us any Demands on him, but as his having plac'd us in that Capacity, and aſſiſted us in it, demands our moſt affectionate Gratitude: Whereas the contrary Spirit has prevail'd, both with reſpect to Religious Services, and Moral Duties: As for Inſtance, in *Rome* and *Judea*, the Effect of it has

been the Ruin of the true Purpoſe of all God's Applications to Mankind, and of theirs to him.

But to conclude this Head of Duties: Contemplating God without Humility, is like mentioning his Name idly and prophanely: Petitions, in ſuch a Temper, are rather Reproaches than Prayers; and Thankſgivings are rather Pardons than Gratitude. A Perſon of ſuch a Spirit, when he puts up any Requeſt to God, ſeems rather to quarrel with him, for having withheld it ſo long, than to ſue for it as a Favour. And when he vouchſafes to acknowledge his receiving it, he ſeems to declare himſelf reconcil'd, rather than oblig'd to him; and imputing any of our Services to God, as Obligations on him, deſtroys the End of all Religious Inſtitutions, prevents all Improvement within our own Souls, and reflects on God in the moſt unnatural Manner. From whence appears the Reaſonableneſs and Conſiſtency of all theſe Duties inſiſted on, as due to God.

Duties to our Neighbours.

The next Head of Duties regulates our Conduct with reſpect to Men: Theſe likewiſe will appear ſo many Proofs of God's Goodneſs and Wiſdom, in the Government of the World.

Men were deſign'd by him, to live in Society; which, in its Nature, requires ſome common Rules of Behaviour, to preſerve its

Juſtice. its Peace and Happineſs. The Principal and moſt neceſſary of theſe is Juſtice; without the Obſervation of which, Society only gives Men a more convenient Opportunity to diſturb and deſtroy each other. And this is ſo plain a Duty, it needs no particular Explication. It may be ſufficient to obſerve in General, 'tis that Rule for our Behaviour, which obliges us to allow others whatever is become their Due, either by the Laws of Nature, or the Laws of that Society in which they live: Not to take or detain from 'em any Part of their Property, nor to miſrepreſent any Part of their Character or Conduct, on any Occaſion, whether Publick or Private. In this Duty, we are not left in any Meaſure to our own Diſcretion, we are indiſpenſibly determin'd by the Right of others.

Charity. The other great Branch of our Duty to other Men, is Kindneſs, or Mercy, or Charity; and this is a more indefinite Duty, ſubject to great Variety of Degrees and Occaſions, referr'd to our own good Diſpoſitions. 'Tis in General, univerſal Benevolence, ſuch a Temper as does not confine it ſelf to bare Injuſtice, does not content it ſelf with doing what may be ſtrictly demanded, does not think it ſufficient not to diſturb Mankind, but acts as the Deputy of Providence, in promoting their Happineſs.

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The two great Parts of this Duty, are Beneficence and Meekneſs: The former of theſe contributes to the Welfare of Human Life, relieves its Diſtreſſes, and aſſiſts its Endeavours after Happineſs: The latter reſtrains ſuch Reſentments, as would make too ſevere Repriſals upon any Provocation; making favourable Allowances where the Caſe will bear them, and being influenc'd by a Tenderneſs for the Criminal, where the Crime is incapable of Favour.

So far as the Happineſs of Life depends on Men's mutual Behaviour, it is protected and promoted by theſe Duties; and it depends on Men's mutual Behaviour in a very great Meaſure. An univerſal Practice of theſe Duties would prevent moſt of thoſe Miſchiefs that now diſturb the World, and deform Human Life.

They who refuſe, when juſtly called on, to contribute to the Relief of the diſtreſſed, do not deſerve the Bleſſings of Society; and they who break the Laws of Faith and Honeſty, by which thoſe Bleſſings are maintain'd, deſerve its Vengeance. They do as much as in them lies to deſtroy it, and are therefore to be treated as common Enemies.

And they who throw off all the Reſtraints of Meekneſs, will, as occaſion offers, break all the Obligations of Benevolence and Juſtice. A Temper that is

inflam'd by every little Provocation, cannot be ſuppoſed long to maintain any conſiderable Benevolence with any Part of the World; nor can it be confin'd within the plain Rules of Juſtice, becauſe it will not be confin'd in its Reſentments and Revenge by any thing but its Power: Nothing will be thought too ſevere, nothing will be allowed to be unjuſt, when 'tis to be conſider'd as a Puniſhment inflicted on thoſe who dar'd to provoke it.

Such are the Duties requir'd by God in our mutual Behaviour; and ſuch Duties tend directly to the Happineſs of Life: They are as plainly ſtampt with the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, as they are with his Authority. And under theſe general Heads are contain'd all Relative Duties; they muſt be ſo many Inſtances of Juſtice or Mercy variouſly circumſtantiated.

Duties to our ſelves. The laſt and ſmalleſt Circle of Duty is Perſonal, the Conduct of our own Minds and Bodies. The Fundamental Reaſon of this Duty is their Preſervation, their reſpective Health, ſuch a Diſpoſition as may beſt anſwer the End of their Creation.

Perfection even in this Part of our Duty, is too high an Accompliſhment for us at preſent to attain: Our Nature has ſuffer'd ſo much ſince our Creator firſt form'd it, that we muſt humbly ſubmit to many Imperfections;

perfections; but for that Reaſon we ſhould take the more Care not to increaſe them.

The Care to be taken of our Bodies may be divided between Temperance and Chaſtity. Chaſtity is perfect, when all Inclinations in this Part of Nature ſubmit to God's Laws, when they don't exceed the Bounds that he has ſet them, when they don't run wild and ſavage without Regard to his Authority. *Care of the Body.* *Chaſtity.*

Theſe Bounds are very plainly declared in the New Teſtament; ſo plainly, that whatever Excuſes may be invented, whatever may be pleaded by a witty Imagination, aſſiſted by the Heat of Luſt, no ſerious Man, that is willing to ſee his Duty, can miſtake it in this Particular.

When theſe Laws are broke through, Luſt can have no Bounds; a Man may promiſe himſelf, he will never go farther than his preſent Inclinations lead him; but when the Authority of God is overborn, and his Conſcience harden'd by overbearing it, he is at the Mercy of the Devil. And if all the Miſchiefs of unbounded Luſt, all the Confuſion that may be expected from it, all the Abominations it brings upon the Body, and all the Diſſoluteneſs it produces in the Mind, if all this be not enough to make it terrible, nothing in this World can; all Arguments from the Nature of Things have loſt their Force.

Temperance.

The ſame Arguments do with equal Force urge on us Temperance likewiſe as a neceſſary Duty. But Temperance has this peculiar to it ſelf, that it is as neceſſary to us, as it is to be Rational and Religious. Such Degrees of Intemperance as ſuſpend the Uſe of our Reaſon, whether by Stupidity or Frenzy, by Exceſs of any Kind, blot out juſt ſo much of our Nature as Rational Creatures, and conſequently ſo much of our Capacity of Religion; and ſuch Degrees as do not quite ſuſpend it, do however proportionably damage it. The Operations of the Mind, when uninfected, and in its natural Vivacity; and its Operations (if they may be called ſo) when clogg'd and infected by Intemperance, differ as much as the Streams of the pureſt Fountain, and the troubled Sea, whoſe Waters caſt up Mire and Dirt.

What Degrees of Liberty may be innocently taken by particular Perſons, can hardly be determined by any but themſelves. The great Variety of Conſtitutions makes it impoſſible to eſtabliſh any Rules in this Caſe, but ſuch as are very General; that may be uſeful to one Man, that would be vicious and miſchievous in another; but groſs Exceſs in any will ſoon diſcover it ſelf, by the Diſturbance it will make. No Man can be guilty of it, without being ſenſible that he is ſo: And when ſuch Exceſs be-

comes habitual, which it is very apt to do upon Encouragement; all the Diſtinction of Human Nature ſinks into outward Shape, and that too very much diſguiſed. Temperance therefore, as it is a neceſſary Care taken of our Bodies, is of great Moment; the Dependance our Minds have on our Bodies evidently make it ſo; beſide what might be ſaid upon the Ruin of our Health, which is advancing ſo far in Self-Murder, and as it were uncreating ſo much of the World.

And if Care be to be taken of our Body for the Sake of our Mind, and be of ſo much Importance, it is very reaſonable a proper Care ſhould be taken of our Mind it ſelf.

Care of the Mind.

Human Mind is uſually divided into the Underſtanding and the Will; and may be properly conſidered as thus diſtinguiſhed; and ſuch Concern for each, as may diſpoſe them both to unite in the great Buſineſs of Life, is our indiſpenſible Duty. Our Underſtanding is naturally capable of very valuable Accompliſhments; but it receives them only in Proportion to the Care we take of it: 'Tis poſſible to neglect it ſo far, as to want the moſt neceſſary Knowledge; but if our Nature be of any Moment, if the Revelations of God be of any Uſe to us, if we have any Reverence for him, or the leaſt Regard for our ſelves, we ſhould cer-

The Underſtanding.

tainly think our ſelves obliged to procure as diſtinct a Knowledge of God's Will concerning us as may be, as diſtinct a Knowledge of the Intereſt we have in him, the Dependance we have on him, and the Behaviour he expects from us, as our Circumſtances will allow.

The Will. And becauſe it is paſt Contradiction, that the Mind does not always act according to its Knowledge, that it is not led by the beſt Light it has, that it does ſometimes careleſly, and ſometimes perverſly wander; it is therefore at leaſt as neceſſary to take care of the Will, as it is to take care of the Underſtanding; to be as much concern'd for the Practice, as for the Knowledge of our Duty. This Care is to be employ'd in recollecting and applying our Knowledge, and then in providing againſt ſuch Influence of any Kind, as may delude or pervert the Will. This Concern is to review thoſe Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge, that may have been laid up in the Progreſs of our Lives; and to guard againſt ſuch vicious Inclinations as would over-rule us, and keep us from making Uſe of them. We muſt conclude from the unavoidable Obſervation of the Lives of Men, and from the Plainneſs and Obviouſneſs of the moſt material Duties of Religion, that it is not Ignorance but Raſhneſs, and depraved Affecti-

ons that ſupport the Extravagancies of the World.

A deliberate Conſideration of the Nature of Things, and a regular well compoſed Alliance between the Affections and the Reaſon, this is the Sobriety of the Mind; and the Violation of this Duty is the worſt Intemperance, the moſt criminal and moſt miſchievous, becauſe it affects the moſt important Parts of Life.

Such is our Duty to God, our Neighbours, and our ſelves. To theſe conſtituent Parts, I ſhall here add Two Laws, that concern the whole Man as accountable to God; the one is, Integrity, the other, Sincerity in the Performance of our Duty; and if the ſeveral Parts of it are no Damage to this preſent Life, it is evident, that a ſincere Performance of the whole can be none.

Our Duty muſt be entire.

It is as neceſſary that our Duty ſhould have all its Parts, as that the Body ſhould have all its Limbs; and it is as neceſſary, that Sincerity ſhould attend each of them, as that the Soul ſhould animate each Limb of the Body. We may through ſome unhappy Ignorance neglect ſome one Duty, but if this be habitually done, it is like living without a Limb: we may live ſo, but Life is the leſs uſeful to us; ſuch Ignorance may be excuſable, but ſtill we ſuffer by it: And though we ſhould perform all thoſe

Actions in which our Duty might conſiſt, yet if the Heart were wanting for the Rational and Religious Direction of them, our Art may be commendable, but not our Goodneſs, we mimick well, but can't be ſaid to live ſo. If our Devotions are ſwell'd with Spiritual Pride, with Encomiums on our ſelves, and uncharitable Reflections on others, our Inſolence is increaſed by the Solemnity in which it is acted, and we are ſo much the farther *from being juſtified.* If we propoſe by them Oſtentation, *and the Praiſe of Men*, we may ſucceed, we may have our Reward, but what is got by it is the worſt of Sacrilege: If we make them a Cloak for our Villanies, to blind the Charity of Human Obſervation, we bid God Defiance, and worſhip his Creatures.

Luke 18. 10.

Mat. 6. 2, 16.

Mat. 23. 14.

Accordingly in our Behaviour towards others, our Duty is very imperfect, unleſs it proceeds from a Moral and Spiritual Principle; nor does it deſerve to be called Duty, any more than a Corpſe does to be called a Man. If we are cautious to obſerve the Rules of Juſtice, only becauſe we think it the beſt Policy in Commerce; if we perform the reſpective Obligations of our ſeveral Relations, only for Fear of ſome Temporal Conſequence, we may be wiſe in our Generation, but ſo far we live without God in the World.

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The ſame muſt be confeſs'd likewiſe, with reſpect to our Minds and Bodies; if we conſcientiouſly preſerve the good Diſpoſition of both, for the ſake of what depends on it, the Religious Uſe of Life, this Care is an eminent Virtue: But without that End, our Care of our Bodies may be Senſuality, and the Care we take of our Minds, may be no more commendable than broad Phylacteries: As the one may be Senſuality, ſo the other may be Pride and Impertinence; neither of 'em above the Accompliſhments of an *Epicurean* or a *Phariſee*.

Obſervations from theſe Two Rules.

Upon all theſe Caſes we may obſerve, That though ſuch Perſons may preſerve the Happineſs of Life ſo far as it depends on the Body and external Circumſtances, yet they loſe all that which depends on the Soul, and at the ſame time, though againſt their Will, they give Teſtimony in favour of Religion in all its Parts. While they gratify their Pride, while they ſeek Praiſe, while they propoſe to conceal their Villany by their Devotions, they plainly declare the univerſal Judgment of Mankind, for the Excellency of a religious Spirit, and for the Improbability of ſuch a Spirit's being irregular in other Things, and herein repreſenting Religion as the great Preſervative of human Nature: While they obſerve the Rules of Juſtice, becauſe they know 'tis for their Intereſt, they proclaim aloud that the Expe-

Experience of Mankind has found the Uſefulneſs of Juſtice, which makes 'em chuſe to encourage Men that they think obſerve it; and the ſame may be ſaid of Charity, which may be mimick'd too upon the ſame Principle. And laſtly, They declare the Uſefulneſs of Temperance and Chaſtity directly, without the Intervention of an Inference; and of all Improvements of the Mind, from the Judgment of Mankind.

And as Sincerity, or a direct Religious End in our Actions, is abſolutely neceſſary, ſo this, where 'tis well eſtabliſh'd, and has a juſt Share in the Heart, will introduce, at leaſt by Degrees, univerſal Obedience; all Duties as equally neceſſary, becauſe enjoin'd by the ſame Authority. 'Twill allow us to neglect none that appear to be Duties, nor will it allow us to be contented with wilful Ignorance; with taking Refuge in it, as out of God's Notice, out of the Liberties of Heaven. As no Part of God's Nature can be deny'd, ſo no Part of his Authority can be renounc'd, without ſuch Conſequences as deſtroy the whole. But this ſhall be farther inſiſted on hereafter. From this View of our Duty, we may conclude the Unreaſonableneſs of all Clamours againſt the Duties of Religion, as if they were unneceſſary Reſtraints upon human Life; as if God had given us Paſſions, Appetites, and Inſtitutions, only to tor-

torment us. The Effects of Religion are quite the contrary, *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.* The old Heathen Obſervation is ſtrictly true, Virtue is certainly its own Reward, though the abundant Goodneſs of God has been pleas'd to make ſuch Additions to it. What Exceptions may be brought againſt it, are taken from ſuch Caſes as turn on the Imperfections of this mortal State; Caſes in which Virtue ſuffers Violence; in which, either through the Infirmities of the Body, or the Iniquities of the World, the moſt Virtuous become, in many Reſpects, unhappy, contrary to the natural Tendency of Virtue, and therefore without the leaſt Imputation to it. *The happy Influence of Religion.*

We ſhould therefore adore that Authority that's exercis'd with ſo much Tenderneſs and Wiſdom; that has confin'd us from nothing that we can fancy Happineſs, but where ſuch Confinement is neceſſary for the ſake of ſome greater Good, ſome regular Advancement in it: And has thereby moſt agreeably connected the Happineſs of both Worlds, and of all Parts of each.

St. *Paul's* Prayer for the *Theſſalonians*, *That the God of peace would ſanctify 'em throughout*; that the whole of 'em, *their ſpirit and ſoul and body, might be preſerv'd blameleſs*, is moſt proper for the Mouths and Hearts of all Chriſtians. When theſe 1 Theſ. 5. 23.

are

are preſerv'd [ἀμέμπτως] Blameleſs, with reſpect to their Judge; or without Complaint, with reſpect to each other; the whole Man is both innocent and happy. This Regularity in all Parts of Nature, is his true Perfection, and comprehends all the Concerns of his Being, his Intereſt in both Worlds. By Spirit, the Apoſtle may mean the Soul, as influenc'd by the Spirit of God; but moſt probably he meant the Spirit of Man, as a Being diſtinct from the Body, and directly employ'd in ſuch Things as are abſtracted, either Reaſoning, or ſuch as relate to a future inviſible State.

By the Body, he means diſtinctly the material Frame, which as ſuch, has its proper Perfections, or accidental Diſorders: And to theſe Two, as they are united, and affect and engage each other in the ſeveral Concerns of this animal Life, he gives the Name [ψυχὴ] Soul, ſomething compos'd of both, conſiſting of ſuch Affections as are form'd and communicated between 'em. This appears to be his Notion of the Soul here, from his [ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος] natural Man, and his [ψυχικὸν σῶμα] natural Body, *i. e.* in both Inſtances, diſpos'd for this animal Life only, unfit for the Spiritual.

1 Cor. 2. 14.
1 Cor. 15. 43.

This Prayer of the Apoſtle's implies, that the ſpiritual, and natural or animal Part of Life, may poſſibly be conſiſtent, and uſeful to each other: But in the preſent State of human

human Nature, it requires great Vigilance, and exact Sincerity, to make 'em ſo. They may all be regularly diſpos'd, all join amicably in the Buſineſs of Life, all ſatisfy'd and eaſy in their reſpective Shares, the Body ſubmitting to the Soul, the Soul to the Spirit, and the Spirit to God. The Apoſtle, in calling God the God of Peace, in this Prayer, implies, that when 'tis not ſo, Confuſion and Miſery follow: From whence it appears, that Man's ſtricteſt Duty is his Intereſt and Happineſs.

Diſorder in any Part of Nature, proportionably deſtroys the whole.

To perſuade Men that they are laying up Pains and Tortures, while they are indulging all the Pleaſures of a Luxurious Life, would probably be deſpis'd as the Diſcourſe of one that would, if he cou'd, make a Virtue of Neceſſity: And to perſuade thoſe, who exert their whole Soul, in multiplying what they think the only Means of Happineſs, that they are indeed labouring to be miſerable; this would probably be receiv'd either with Pity or Contempt: And as the Influence of carnal Affections are frequently ſtrong enough to divert the Arguments of the Spirit, either to keep him from ſeeing 'em for want of Attention, or immediately call him off when he does ſee 'em, and prevent his thinking any more of 'em: So are they ſometimes ſo powerful, as to deſpiſe all Evidences, and directly deny 'em. And to admoniſh the

Diſ-

Diſputer of this World, priding himſelf in a trifling Gaiety, and Wantonneſs of Thought, rallying the Claims of his Maker, and diverting himſelf with the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith; to tell ſuch a one, that he deſtroys the beſt Part of Life; that he throws away like a Child, the moſt ineſtimable Treaſure, for want of Judgment enough to know its Value; that he confines his Happineſs to this World, and prevents the Perfection of his Spirit; all this, 'tis like, would be receiv'd as Bigotry and Prejudice, or a grave way of talking allow'd to a particular Character. But however difficult it may be to convince Men of it, 'tis plain enough, both from Experience and from Scripture, that every Diſorder in any Part of Nature, is in its Conſequences, more or leſs deſtructive of the Happineſs of the whole. 'Tis poſſible for us to be ſo extravagantly pleas'd with making Proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil its Luſts, as to make our ſelves incapable, not only of the Happineſs of Heaven, but of the common Portion of Mankind in this mortal Life. 'Tis eaſy to engage the Affections and Paſſions in the Intereſts of this World, with ſo much Zeal and ſo much Confuſion, as to allow the Spirit no Opportunities to provide for Eternity. And on the other Hand, 'tis no ſtrange Thing for ſpiritual Pride to make an Infidel or an Enthuſiaſt; for theſe Two oppo-

oppoſite Extreams proceed often from the ſame Cauſe, an unreaſonable Opinion of our own Accompliſhments: If Enthuſiaſm follow from it, it raiſes in the Mind great Diſorders, and forms a Monſter in the Spiritual Life: If Infidelity follow from it, it ſtifles the Spirit in the Birth, and the Man is reduc'd to a natural or terreſtrial Life. Upon the whole 'tis certain, that all Degrees of Wickedneſs, whether Spiritual or Carnal, cauſe a proportionable Diſorder in Nature, and bring on it, either in one Part or another, certain Miſchief.

God's Laws preſerve Nature.

As the Laws of God, in all Parts of the natural or material World, keep the whole from returning to its firſt Confuſion, ſo his Precepts, reſpectively apply'd and obſerv'd in the moral or ſpiritual World, have the ſame happy Influence; every Part of the Nature of Man conducted by thoſe Precepts, not only maintains its own Perfection, but is uſeful to the reſt; and when all are thus conducted, the whole of Life is Regular and Happy; and when any Part becomes licentious, it becomes a Grievance to the others: And when the Authority of God and Nature, is in general neglected, the whole Man's overwhelm'd with Miſery, as ſure as the World muſt be drown'd, when the Windows of Heaven are open'd, and the Fountains of the great Deep are broken up.

To

Man form'd for a more perfect Life.

To make the ſeveral Obligations laid on each Part of Nature, appear unexceptionable, it need only be remember'd, that 'tis plain from Revelation, Man was form'd for a more perfect Life than he lives at preſent; and form'd in ſuch a Manner, as to riſe gradually to his full Perfection. The Wiſdom of his Maker muſt be ſuppos'd to form every Part conſiſtent with that End, and to enjoin the Man a ſuitable Behaviour. As Earth is repreſented the Footſtool of God, and Heaven his Throne, ſo to Man it ought to be conſider'd as a Convenience only to the lower Part of his Nature, while the better Part of him is converſant in Heaven, contracting a Friendſhip with God, and providing for the Life of Angels; to which it riſes by the Duties of this, as by ſo many Steps that lead to it.

Severities in Chriſtianity uſeful.

The Precepts of ſome ſeeming Severities, Self-denial, Mortification, and ſacrificing the Body, may perhaps be thought inconſiſtent with the Happineſs of this Life, though they ſhould be allow'd to forward that of the other: But ſo far as theſe are univerſal and conſtant Duties, they are deſign'd only to recover the Authority of the Spirit, when the Affections have been careleſly ſuffer'd to uſurp and grow Licentious; and that Recovery will abundantly recompenſe our Trouble: Or if they are continued as Means of greater Spiritual Perfection,

ction, they amount only to this, a Man that has ſet his Heart upon intellectual Improvements, and makes a ſuitable Application, and confines Nature to a ſtrict Reſervedneſs as to ſenſual Entertaiments, much ſtricter than is neceſſary for his Health, ſuch a Man may be truly ſaid to deny himſelf many Enjoyments, and much Pleaſure, but I believe moſt Men would be aſham'd to ſay, he loſt any Happineſs by it.

CHAP. III.

The Improvement of the Soul by Religious Duties, the great Buſineſs of this Life, and neceſſary to the Happineſs of the other.

GOD has not plac'd Man in Poſſeſſion of all he deſigns for him; he propoſes ſome Improvement here, and his Perfection hereafter: He has aſſiſted Chriſtians in this Improvement, with eminent Advantages, and will with great Juſtice expect a ſuitable Account.

Preparation for Heaven.

The Buſineſs therefore of a Chriſtian's Life, is to make proportionable Improvements, to recommend himſelf to Heaven, and prepare himſelf for removing thither; to diſpoſe his Soul to a juſt Love, Reverence and Admiration of God, to purify it from all Things that are diſpleaſing to him, all Things that indiſpoſe it for the Enjoyment of his Preſence, for the Converſation of Angels and the Spirits of Juſt Men made Perfect, for the refin'd and ſpiritual Employments of that glorious Life.

God's Decrees founded on Nature.

Without this Preparation, it is not to be expected: Whether it depends on the Conſtitution of our Nature, on the Relation between Virtue and Happineſs, Vice and Miſery; or on any abſolute Decrees of God upon a vertuous or vicious Converſation, for which we can give no rational Account: Still, if ſuch be the Conſequence, the Argument for a Religious Uſe of Life, is the ſame. But to ſuppoſe God's Decrees, in this Caſe, founded upon Nature, and ſuited to it, does, at the ſame Time, juſtify God, and take off thoſe treacherous Suppoſitions, with which too many anſwer the Suggeſtions of their Conſcience, and continue tolerably eaſy in a profane vicious Life. Were we not inform'd by Revelation, that the Happineſs of the other World has an entire Dependance upon our Conduct in this, that our Condition there is determin'd

by

by our Behaviour here, yet even Natural Reaſon, and common Equity might direct us to think ſo. It would be unnatural to ſuppoſe, that we might live like Brutes here, and like Angels there; that we might be Captive to the Devil all our Life, and be redeemed by God at our Death; that we might enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin for this Seaſon, and then eternal Happineſs with the People of God; that we might corrupt and pervert our Souls with vicious Habits, confirm'd by long Practice, and then throw 'em off with our Bodies, and be entirely happy, in a Life directly contrary to what we have hitherto been fond of: To ſuppoſe that the Life of Heaven ſhould follow this, as independently of us, as one Seaſon does another, is reducing the Rational World to the Laws of the Vegetative. Our Saviour often urges this Improvement; he earneſtly cautions us, both againſt the vain Attempt of impoſing upon God by the Formalities of Religion, and againſt an unreaſonable preſumptuous Dependance on his Mercy.

Without ſuppoſing a Neceſſity for this Improvement, and conſequently a Neceſſity for employing this Life to that Purpoſe, 'twill be impoſſible to account for that Admonition of St *Paul's*, *Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and* Phil. 2. 12. *Conſider'd.*

to do of his good pleaſure. What a ſtrange Amuſement is this, if we have nothing elſe to do but to divert our ſelves 'till our Glaſs is run, and then take Poſſeſſion of Heaven, as the natural Conſequence of Life; as an Inheritance to which we have a Right at ſuch an Age, without any other Qualifications. The Reaſon given for this Admonition, would, upon this Foot, make it more ſurprizing: He repreſents God buſy in improving his Creatures Souls, and preſſes them to a double Diligence on that Account; and if this be not a neceſſary Work, how ill did it become an Apoſtle, to give God this Part in it. The Piety of the Heathens, gave this Rule, as a Part of natural Decency, that a God ſhould not be introduc'd, unleſs in ſome Difficulty great enough to deſerve it. Such, without Doubt, the Salvation of Man is: The Education of an immortal Spirit for Heaven, much wants the Aſſiſtance of God, and was thought worthy of it; and may therefore well be made the Buſineſs of this Life; and they juſtly condemn'd for not anſwering the End of their Creation, who neglect their Souls, and think of nothing leſs than a Spiritual Improvement; dividing their Time among the various Amuſements of this World, and corrupting 'em with ſuch vicious Habits, as will be contracted by 'em.

This Doctrine may have Conſequences that may juſtly fright a great Part of Mankind, and make 'em ready to reply, Who then can be ſaved? A particular Anſwer to this Queſtion, can be given by none but God, and will be given at no Time but the Day of Judgment. But we may in general ſafely conclude, they who ſeriouſly practiſe the ſeveral Duties of Religion, as they relate to God, to their Neighbours, and to themſelves, do certainly anſwer the End of Life, and will by a natural Conſequence, ſpiritualize their Temper; and if they continue ſo to do, they need not queſtion being preferr'd in Heaven, in proportion to their Improvements here: And 'tis to be hop'd, the Number of theſe is greater than wicked Men repreſent it, to keep themſelves in Countenance. As for thoſe who ſeem to keep a ſort of Neutrality between the Spirit and the Fleſh, between God and Satan; who have not diſtinguiſh'd themſelves in Vice, and yet ſeem Strangers to the Spirit of Religion; who are far from any ſpiritual Improvement, and have, perhaps, as groſs Conceptions of it, as *Nicodemus*; and yet in regard to the Favour, and good Opinion of the World, appear juſt and honeſt in their Dealings, and not ſcandalous in their Lives: What Mercy, or what Happineſs ſuch Perſons may be capable of, no Man can ſay, becauſe he cannot ſee the real State

The Conſequence of this Doctrine.

of their Souls; but they certainly are far from making the beſt Uſe of Life; far from anſwering the Character of Chriſtians, as 'tis drawn in the Scriptures.

As for thoſe who are remov'd by Providence, before they have the Uſe of their Reaſon, and conſequently before they are capable of any Spiritual Improvement; all ſuch ſhall be plac'd in ſome ſort of Happineſs, ſuiting the Capacities of their Souls; which having never been abus'd by vicious Habits, may be capable of being made very happy, through God's Mercy in Chriſt. It ſeems unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, they ſhall equal others in Happineſs, who have been exercis'd in Piety and Virtue to a good old Age; but Variety and Degrees of Happineſs in Heaven, are no Deformity. There are diverſities of Gifts in this World, from the ſame Spirit; and 'tis very reaſonable to ſuppoſe 'em anſwer'd, when they have been faithfully improv'd, with ſuitable Diverſities of Happineſs in the other. God's Juſtice and Wiſdom, will doubtleſs ſettle all Things in the moſt natural, moſt decent Order.

The Confuſion of the contrary Suppoſition.

And on the contrary, it muſt, I think, throw all Things into Confuſion, to ſuppoſe wicked Men to want nothing but the meer arbitrary Mercy or Conſent of God, to make 'em as happy as the reſt. It ſeems entirely unnatural to ſuppoſe, that ſuch Spirits

Spirits can be happy in the Enjoyment of God, when they have contracted an habitual Neglect or Hatred of him, and his Perfections: To ſuppoſe that ſuch Spirits can be fit for ſuch Society, as adorns and bleſſes Heaven, when they have liv'd like Salvages upon Earth; to ſuppoſe they can be qualify'd for a glorified Body, and ſuch refin'd Affections as attend it, when they have ſo much abus'd this natural Body, and been enſlav'd to Senſuality.

Habits contracted here, remain in the Soul.

'Twill eaſily appear to any one that reads this, that the Truth of it muſt depend on this Principle, That Habits, whether of Virtue or Vice, contracted while we live in the Body, will continue their Influence on the Mind, after its Separation. This gives a plain Account, why God ſhould inſiſt peremptorily on ſuch Conditions of Salvation. If vertuous and pious Habits are neceſſary and permanent, none but Men of Piety and Virtue can be qualify'd for Heaven: And if he's pleas'd to give us ſome uſeful Directions to form ſuch Habits, it muſt needs be our Duty to attend to 'em, and proceed upon 'em.

Too many, for want of conſidering this great Truth, content themſelves with outward Solemnities, overlooking the Influence they ought to have upon the Mind, which is their true End; and others obſerving the Impertinence of this, make

haſty Concluſions againſt the Inſtitutions of God, as if nothing were of Uſe, but what paſſes within. And a Third Sort, not convinc'd of the Truth of this Principle, but eaſily diſcovering the Vanityof Religion, merely External, ſtand Neuter, as they imagine, and ſeem to ſuppoſe this Life a mere Parentheſis in our Being.

I ſhall here lay down what appears to me a full Evidence in this important Point; and then make ſome Reply to what Objections I can apprehend againſt it.

Firſt Argument. The Firſt Evidence I ſhall mention, is St. *Paul*'s Reaſoning, in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Chapters of his Firſt to *Corinth.* The Words which connect this Argument, 1 Cor. 12. 31. are theſe, Chap. 12. Verſe 31. *And yet I ſhow you a more excellent way.* Theſe 13.—— Words refer us to what went before, and promiſe ſomething to follow, of more Importance. What goes before, is a great Number of miraculous Gifts, granted by God's Goodneſs, for the Edification of his Church: And what follows in the next Chapter, is that excellent Endowment of the Mind, Habitual Charity. This, St. *Paul* takes Care to diſtinguiſh from ſuch outward Actions as may be done without that inward Principle, though they are uſually to be ſuppos'd the Effect of it. He then gives us the Reaſon why this Endowment

ment is of greater Value than thoſe Gifts; 'tis becauſe they ſhall fail, their Uſe is for this World only; but Charity never fails, that ſhall accompany the Soul to Heaven, and is for that Reaſon not only more valuable than thoſe Gifts, but greater too than Faith and Hope. That what is here meant by Charity, is an eſtabliſhed Habit in the Mind, is very plain from that Suppoſition, that a Man may give all his Goods to feed the Poor, and yet not have Charity: And that this Habit is above the Power of Death, not to be deſtroy'd by that Shock given to Nature, but Permanent in the Soul, this appears from the whole Courſe of St. *Paul's* Argument, he prefers it to periſhing Things for that Reaſon. But the Things here ſaid to fail and to vaniſh away, are ſuch as neither fail nor vaniſh till after Death; and therefore when he prefers Charity to them for this Reaſon, becauſe it never fails, he muſt mean, that it continues in the Soul after Death. Faith, in St *Paul's* Senſe here, is to believe what is future on God's Authority, and therefore when the Subjects of it are accompliſhed, *i. e.* when they become preſent, Faith muſt needs ceaſe; much in the ſame Manner, Hope is likewiſe ſuperſeded; when we are actually poſſeſſed of what we hoped for, we muſt be inſenſible of that Poſſeſſion if we can hope on; But Charity, as it ſignifies Habitual

The Habit of Charity continues.

bitual Benevolence, can never be out of Date, as long as there are Fellow-Creatures to exerciſe it on; and this peculiar Excellence of Charity, this Immortality of it, is the Foundation of this Argument in its Favour. But ſhould we ſuppoſe this excellent Habit to ſicken, and die with the Body, and be either infuſed by God in a future State, as a Reward for our Actions here, or elſe to be gradually contracted again in a natural way as it is here, this Foundation will fail; for Men ſhall be rewarded for their Faith and Hope; they both proceed from a virtuous Dependance upon God; but they themſelves can't be continued in the Mind, it is contrary to their Nature; but Charity will continue, which is a good Reaſon why we ſhould be ſolicitous to habituate our Minds to it: The more we improve in it, the fitter we ſhall be for Heaven, and conſequently the happier we ſhall be in it. There could be no Force in this Argument, if this virtuous Habit vaniſhed with our laſt Breath. And if this Habit attends the Mind into a future State, there can be no Reaſon to queſtion, but that others do ſo too, all whoſe Subjects are capable of being tranſlated thither: And where the particular Subjects or Materials are not capable of that State, they form however ſome more General Habit, which will continue and affect the Soul according

Therefore others too.

ing

ing to their Nature. From hence it appears that Moral Habits, whether virtuous or vicious, if they are not removed by a contrary Practice in this Life, become the natural Foundation of Happineſs or Miſery in the other; upon which God's Juſtice and Goodneſs builds ſuch Superſtructures as will juſtify themſelves, when the Confuſion and Ignorance of this Life ceaſes.

Secondly, Another good Proof of this, and one that will often occur to all that read the New Teſtament, is the Repreſentation of the Improvement of Chriſtians in Religion, under the Metaphor of Building. Edification is the uſual Name for ſuch Improvement: Chriſtians are to build themſelves up on their moſt Holy Faith, and mutually to edify each other. The Goſpel Inſtitutions, as to the Miniſtry particularly, St. *Paul* tells us, *Epheſ.* 4. *were for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt, till we all come to a perfect Man, to the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt.* *Second Argument.* *Edification.* Eph. 4.

Now to what Purpoſe ſo much Concern, why is ſo much Care taken to build up what muſt be ſo ſoon ruin'd by Death? The pompous and laborious Proviſions for this Life, are frequently expoſed in Scripture on this Conſideration, That they who make them, muſt ſoon be removed, and

have no Share, no Concern in them. The beſt of Men are as Mortal as the worſt; and if all their Labour in eſtabliſhing the Habits of Rightcouſneſs in their Souls, be demoliſhed together with their Bodies, and ſubject to the ſame Uncertainty, How ſhall it be deliver'd from this Diſcouragement? How ſhall ſo much Solicitude about it, both Human and Divine, be juſtified?

Third Argument. Another comprehenſive Argument for this, is St. *Paul*'s glorying in the Name of Chriſtianity; ſometimes to make the *Jews* ſenſible of their Obligations to God for it; and very frequently to keep his *Gentile* Converts from ſubmitting to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law.

I ſhall at preſent inſiſt only on that ſtrong Remonſtrance in Favour of Chriſtianity, in which he calls thoſe Rites and Ceremonies, the beggarly Elements of the World. This he makes Uſe of ſeveral Times in thoſe Epiſtles which he writ peculiarly on that Subject, that injudicious Competition between the Law and the Goſpel.

Were the Duties of Religion to be conſider'd only as the Commands of God, the eaſier they are to be obſerved, the more deſirable; and without doubt, Temples and Altars, and Sacrifices, and Oblations, and Ceremonious Times, and a Multitude of

of ſuch Things, are eaſier provided, than Habits of Piety and Virtue.

Upon this Foot therefore *Judaiſm* had certainly the Advantage of Chriſtianity, and Heatheniſm the Advantage of them both; for God requires no more of any Man than he is capable of performing; no Man is obliged any farther than God's Commands are directed to him; the fewer Laws therefore he lives under, the leſs Care will be ſufficient to diſcharge his Duty, and ſecure God's Favour.

But if the real Diſpoſition of the Soul be the great Concern, then the Chriſtian may juſtly glory in the Lord. Accordingly, when St. *Paul* urges this Triumph in his Second Chapter to the *Coloſſians*, he lays the Diſadvantage of ſuch mean Inſtitutions upon this, that they have not that Influence from Chriſt, as their Head, which Chriſtians have; an Influence which anſwers to the common Nouriſhment diffuſed through all the Members of a natural Body.

This Spiritual Improvement from Chriſtianity, he calls the Increaſe of God; and it is plain, this Increaſe, this Improvement conſiſts in the good Qualities of the Mind: But if ſuch Qualities are to be diſſolved with the Body, if the Soul muſt be the ſame when ſhe enters a Future State, as if ſhe had never received ſuch Increaſe, never made ſuch Improvement, they can be of no Moment with

with Reſpect to that State, no more than the preſent Bulk or Features of the Body.

Many particular Texts may be obſerved that confirm this Principle; but moſt of them will be found to reſolve themſelves into one of theſe general Arguments, Edification, and the Advantage, or Preference of Chriſtianity.

And if theſe mean the Improvement of the Mind, and it be neceſſary, in order to make that of any Moment, to ſuppoſe the Habits, in which that Improvement conſiſts, to continue in the Soul; there are then as many Authorities for the Truth of this Principle, as there are Texts of that Nature: For whatever is neceſſary to the Truth of any Part of Scripture, is certainly true; that which ſhows its Neceſſity to that End, ſhows its Truth. That this Principle ſhould not be formally proved in Scripture, or ſo much as directly aſſerted in ſo many Words, ſeems not ſtrange. The whole Scheme of Chriſtianity is ſettled for the Improvement of the Mind, for preparing it for Heaven, for its being well qualified for ſuch a Spiritual Life: Every Part therefore of ſuch an Inſtitution ſuppoſes and confirms it.

But we may obſerve one remarkable Caſe in Scripture, which, though not anſwering in every Particular, may give a great deal of Light to this.

And

And that is, the Caſe of the fallen Angels: Notwithſtanding their Remove from every Thing that might before corrupt their Minds, or provoke their Corruptions to exert themſelves; notwithſtanding their preſent Diſgrace, and their Expectations of future Vengeance, they perſiſt in all their vicious Habits; they believe and tremble, and yet act in Defiance of their Maker. The State of their Minds may be concluded from ſeveral Texts of Scripture. *The Caſe of the fallen Angels.*

In the 13th Chapter of the *Acts*, when *Elymas* the Sorcerer withſtood St. *Paul*, ſeeking to turn away the Deputy from the Faith, the Apoſtle rebukes him in theſe Words, *O full of ſubtilty and all miſchief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteouſneſs.* And St. *John*, in the 3d Chapter of his Firſt Epiſtle, places the Nature of God, and the Nature of the Devil, as the two Originals of Good and Evil: *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the devil, whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.* Acts 13. 1 John 3. 10.

From ſuch Inſtances it appears, how obſtinately their vicious Habits are fix'd in their Minds; and probably their Remove from Heaven, was a greater Alteration, than a Human Soul's Remove from the Earth.

If

If any thing could overcome Pride and Malice, and all Sorts of Unrighteouſneſs, it might be expected, that being reſerved in Everlaſting Chains, under Darkneſs, to the Judgment of the great Day, ſhould overcome them. Shame, or Fear, or Hope; their abject State, or the Danger of provoking ſeverer Vengeance, or the Poſſibility of obtaining ſome Mitigation of their Puniſhments; one or all of theſe, ſupported by the Impertinences and Uſeleſneſs of continuing to indulge them, might probably ſuppreſs by Degrees the Influence of their Vices, were it not that the Power of Habit eſtabliſhed in the Soul, is beyond our preſent Apprehenſions. But though we cannot apprehend it, if the Nature of God, the Author and Object of all Religion, requires that it ſhould be ſuppoſed, it is then certain, whatever Difficulties may attend it: And that the Nature of God, as the Author and Object of all Religion, does require that ſuch a laſting Strength of Habits ſhould be ſuppoſed, may appear from theſe plain Truths.

First, 'Tis certain God requires thoſe Duties to which we are obliged, not for his own Sake, but for ours.

This is excellently repreſented by St. *Paul*, in his Speech to the *Athenians*, *Acts* 17. He declares, from the Majeſty and Perfections of God, that it is abſurd to ſuppoſe he

inſiſts

inſiſts on the Solemnities of Religion, becauſe he needed any thing; he is himſelf, the Author and the Giver of all Things.

He then declares, he plac'd Men on the Earth, in their ſeveral Ages and Nations, that they ſhould ſeek him, if haply they might feel after him, and find him.

Their Happineſs in him was what he propoſed, and therefore he left no Age, no Nation, without ſufficient Evidence of ſuch a glorious Being; but in the Chriſtian World, he is more particularly earneſt for the Reformation of Mankind; for their Conformity to him, as the great Exemplar of Happineſs and Perfection.

For this End, the External Religion eſtabliſhed by him, is formed in Spirit and in Truth: And the End of this, is, that we may partake of the Divine Nature, eſcaping the Corruption that is in the World thro' Luſt; and then, add to our Faith Virtue, and a regular Progreſs through all our Duties; for he who does not ſo is blind, and cannot ſee afar off, he does not diſtinguiſh the End of Chriſtianity. The Accompliſhment of the Soul therefore, in all its proper Perfections, is the End of Chriſtianity; this makes our Calling and Election ſure; this adminiſters to us, an Entrance into the Everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour: This is St. *Peter*'s Beatifick Method, in the 1ſt Chapter of his 2d Epiſtle.

2. The Duties of Religion regard the other World.

And this likewiſe proves a Second Point of great Moment in this Subject, which is, that all the Duties of Religion do ultimately regard the other World, not this. The whole Scope of the New Teſtament is Internal Goodneſs; the Circumciſion of the Heart; a new Man, which after God, is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. It can't be ſaid, that the *Moſaic* Law did not provide for the Peace and Happineſs of this Life; and therefore, the Additional Concern expreſs'd by Chriſtianity, cannot regard the preſent Good of Mankind: And if it regards a future State, it muſt have a laſting Influence on the Soul; otherwiſe no Advantage accrues to the Religious and Virtuous Man himſelf, nor any to the reſt of the World: And if ſo, no Rational Account can be given, why ſuch Righteouſneſs, and ſuch Holineſs are requir'd.

To make an Eternal State depend on the Conveniencies of this Life, as on a poſitive Condition, without any natural Connexion, this ſeems unworthy of univerſal Wiſdom: And its being made to depend, as ſuch a Condition, on our contributing to the Happineſs of this Life, will appear ſufficiently improbable, if we conſider with what Contempt the World is ſpoke of in the ſame Scriptures, as it ſignifies our Concern in this Life: We are perſuaded to neglect it as much

much as poſſible; to conſider our ſelves as Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth. And are we enjoyn'd to neglect this World for the Sake of Religion, and yet at the ſame Time to perform all our Duties for the Sake of this World? No, certainly; the End of all is in the other World; the Means muſt reach it. And this is confirmed by the frequent Oppoſition inſiſted on, in Scripture, between the Fleſh and the Spirit, that is, between the Concerns of this Life, and the Concerns of the other. The Character, which St. *Paul* reproaches ſo often under the Name of Carnal, means only ſuch a Temper, as diſregards the other World, and conſults only the Happineſs of this: And ſince the Apoſtle inſiſts ſo much upon ſuch Reproaches, it muſt be allowed, that all our Duties ultimately regard the other World. And then,

Thirdly, If all our Duties regard the other World, if they are enjoyn'd us for the Sake of that, this Regard muſt be founded, either on the Rewards propoſed, without any Concern for the Diſpoſitions of our Minds, or elſe on the Habits of our Minds, as neceſſary to that State of Happineſs, of of which thoſe Rewards are Part: If this Regard be founded on ſuch Moral Habits, as neceſſary to that State of Happineſs,

the Rewards propoſed, are a proper Encouragement for our forming ſuch Habits, in Oppoſition to all the Temptations of this World. But if it be fix'd on the Rewards themſelves, without any Regard to the Mind, our Duty is a meer arbitrary Condition, without any End: And if a meer arbitrary Condition without any End, do not at firſt Sight appear ſufficiently unworthy of God, it will appear more plainly ſo when it is farther conſider'd: A Reward is ſomething propoſed to encourage Actions for the Sake of ſome End; the Agent may propoſe the Reward, as the End it ſelf; but that Power from which the Reward proceeds, muſt propoſe ſomething diſtinct from it: And if our Duties are encouraged for the Sake of any thing diſtinct from the Reward, it muſt be in the Influence of ſuch Duties, forming proper Habits in our Mind: Such Duties can influence another World, only by influencing our Minds habitually; and ſuch preſent Influence would be uſeleſs, did not the Habits form'd by it, continue in the Soul; were they not tranſlated with it, independent of the Body; were they to be loſt by the Way, could they not ſubſiſt without the Body, they could be of no future Uſe. To be ſolicitous about contracting and ſettling them in the Soul, would be too much like providing now Food or Ray-

Rayment for the Body after its Reſurrection: And

Fourthly, As all our Duty muſt be a meer Arbitrary Condition, if it do not of it ſelf influence our Minds as to a future State, ſo it will follow likewiſe, that all Laws muſt be meerly poſitive; that there can be no natural Difference between Good and Evil: And ſetting aſide the little that depends on our Conduct confin'd to this World, there will be no viſible Foundation for the Rewards and Puniſhments of another.

If a Man has abuſed and corrupted the Nature God gave him, and ſo perverted it with vicious Habits, that 'tis become incapable of Happineſs, 'tis undeniably Juſt and Reaſonable, for God to puniſh him with ſuch Additional Miſery as he ſhall think fit.

And on the other Hand, If a Man has faithfully purſued the End of his Creation, and improved his Mind, by the Directions God has given him, 'tis as evidently Rational, if the Goodneſs of God is pleaſed to add to the natural Goodneſs of ſuch a Mind, ſome Advantages which it could not of it ſelf attain to.

Such Rewards and Puniſhments are declared, to engage Men to reſiſt thoſe Temptations that delude them into Vice, or fright them from attempting Virtue: They

are a Balance for the Pleaſures of Sin, and the Severities of ſtrict Piety; and as ſuch, they clear the Way to Virtue. They eaſe the Mind of ſuch Incumbrances, and leave it to an unprejudiced Choice.

But Vice can't be reformed by Fear, nor Virtue form'd by Hope; External Actions may be declin'd or perform'd upon ſuch Motives, but Habits of Virtue or Vice depend on the Principles of the Heart.

If a Man ſhould ſay, providing I may be ſo rewarded, I will be virtuous; his ſaying it, plainly ſhows, he neither is, nor deſigns to be ſo, nor knows what Virtue is: But important Rewards and Puniſhments may fix the Attention of the Soul, and bring it to particular, as well as general Reſolutions; and when theſe Reſolutions are purſued, the Intereſt of Vice will grow weaker, and conſequently the Intereſt of Virtue will increaſe. And as vicious Habits decay, virtuous ones will flouriſh; and when a Mind is ſincerely eſtabliſhed in the Love of God and Virtue, it is then a proper Subject for the Divine Goodneſs to improve. But if notwithſtanding the Difference there was, between a virtuous and vicious Soul in this Life, there be none when they come firſt into the other; if they are both like white Paper, diſcharged of all that had been writ on them, God's dealing with them ſeems meerly arbitrary; and the Laws given them here, differ nothing,

thing, as to this Iſſue of them, from political and poſitive; and no Regard for Men appears in the Duties enjoyn'd them; nor can God be ſaid to require them for their Sake. The Evidence therefore for this important Principle both from Scripture and Reaſon, may be ſumm'd up in this ſhort View.

In the firſt Place, a great Concern is expreſſed in the New Teſtament for the Improvement of the Souls of Chriſtians; and this Concern is expreſſed under the Similitude of Building; but to what Purpoſe ſo much Concern, why ſo much Care taken to build up what muſt be ſo ſoon ruin'd by Death?

Again, St. *Paul's* frequent glorying in the Name of Chriſtianity, and the Arguments he draws from it to perſuade Chriſtians to be eminent in Spiritual Endowments; every Thing of this Kind depends on this Foundation, and muſt ſtand or fall with this Principle; his Reaſoning on this Head will not be true without it.

And to ſupport this great Truth againſt ſuch Difficulties, as may at firſt View ſeem to preſs hard upon it, we have a remarkable Fact recorded in Scripture; an eminent Example of the Obſtinacy of vicious Habits fix'd in Spirits: And that is the Caſe of the fallen Angels.

And laſtly, The Nature of God, as the Author and Object of all Religion, requires,

that the Truth of this Principle ſhould be ſuppos'd.

From the Nature of God, 'tis certain he requires all our Duties, not for his own ſake, but for ours.

And it appears ſufficiently from Scripture, that the main Good propos'd from theſe Duties, is not plac'd in this World, but in the other: This appears from the many Exhortations given us to improve our Souls in Contempt of this World. But the Good propos'd by the Duties of Religion, as plac'd in the other World, can no otherwiſe be affected by them, than as they form in our Minds laſting Habits; without that, all that hath been done in this Life muſt be void, and in itſelf of no Effect, as if it had never been.

And thus the Rewards and Puniſhments diſtributed by God, would have no real Foundation: They would be the Iſſues of arbitrary Will and Pleaſure, depending on Laws that have no laſting Uſe.

But if God requires our Duties for our ſakes, this can't be the Caſe: And his Nature proves he does. However, though it ſeems very plain, that this Principle muſt be true; yet it may be attended with many Difficulties. So far as Objections may ariſe from the Nature of human Mind, we need not be much concerned for Anſwers.

All acquir'd Habits in the Mind are ſtrong Inclinations ſettled by Uſe, or by the frequent

quent Repetitions of ſuch Thoughts as compoſe their Subjects. Outward Actions contribute to them, but no otherwiſe than as they help to print ſuch Thoughts deeper on the Mind.

Such ſtrong Inclinations all Men muſt be ſenſible they have in their Souls. We know by Experience we contract Habits, but how they ſettle in the Soul we know not: We are too much Strangers to the better Part of our Nature: We can't ſpeak of an Immaterial Being, but in Metaphor, in ſuch Expreſſions as refer us to our Senſes. If therefore we find our ſelves at a Loſs to explain how Habits keep their Strength in our Souls when ſeparate from our Bodies, this is no Argument againſt the Fact; ſince we can't explain how they get that Strength at preſent, now they are united to them.

There are ſo many Difficulties to be rais'd upon the Affections and Conditions of human Mind at preſent; ſo many things, which we are in Fact very ſure of, of which we can give no account, that any thing of that kind may juſtly be anſwer'd, by confeſſing the Imperfection of our preſent Knowledge.

But ſuch Objections as ariſe either from Scripture, or from plain Morality and Equity, ſhould not be ſuffered to lie as Weights upon ſuch a uſeful Principle; ſuch ought to be

be remov'd, that we may with the greater Life purſue the Advantages it propoſes.

Objection from Grace. From other Queſtions that have been rais'd from Scripture, upon our being ſav'd by Grace, it may be ſuppos'd 'twill be objected here, That Chriſtianity repreſents our Acceptance with God, not to be of Works, but of Grace; and that therefore the Habits of our own Minds can't be the Foundation of our future Happineſs, but the undeſerved Mercy of God. And this Objection may ſeem ſufficiently ſupported by many Texts of Scripture, particularly by *Titus* 3. 5. where the Love of God to Man is ſaid to appear, *Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but by his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.*

Anſwer. As to all ſuch Texts in general, 'twill be proper firſt to obſerve this Diſtinction: Some of them do mean Eternal Salvation, but many of them do not; and particularly this part of St. *Paul's* Epiſtle to *Titus*: This and many others mean no more than the Favour of God, in having call'd the Perſons concern'd into the Chriſtian Church, which is repreſented as a State of Salvation; but the final Succeſs of Men in it, depends on themſelves.

Such Texts therefore are no Objection, but on the contrary, a Confirmation of this Truth; as I have before obſerv'd, from St. *Paul's*

Paul's triumphing in the Name of Chriſtianity. Thoſe Texts in which our Eternal Salvation is imputed to the Grace or Favour of God, wou'd be a ſtrong Objection, were they rightly underſtood to exclude Works; but this they by no means do: They always ſuppoſe them; and our being call'd to be Chriſtians is frequently urg'd, as a good Reaſon for Zeal and Induſtry in Piety and Virtue. But ſtill, the Grace or Mercy of God is to be thankfully acknowledged, even in this Eternal Subject; but it conſiſts in his accepting, and aſſiſting our imperfect Righteouſneſs for the Sake of Chriſt; and imperfect the Righteouſneſs of the beſt of Men will be. This Imperfection may probably be gradually ſupply'd in Heaven; but God hath no where given us any reaſon to expect, that he will take the whole upon himſelf, and as it were, replant the Soul with new Faculties and Habits. The new Creature is to be form'd in this Life; but as no Part of the Creation can ſucceed and proſper without his Bleſſing, the moſt finiſh'd Chriſtian will want his Mercy.

Objection from the Meanneſs of Human Virtue.

However, This may ſtill be inſiſted on as a natural Objection, That human Accompliſhments in Virtue are ſo imperfect at beſt, as not to be fit to be made the Foundation of Eternal Happineſs.

If this Objection proceeds from a liſtleſs Mind, chuſing to throw itſelf upon the abſolute

lute Grace of God; what has been already ſaid upon that, is a ſufficient Anſwer. But if it proceeds from ſincere Humility, ſinking human Nature below its real Standard;

Anſwer. This may be farther ſaid for its Satisfaction. Human Nature in its original Perfection, is univerſally allow'd to be created for Eternity; and therefore its Accompliſhments, when ſuch as that Nature was made capable of, muſt be a ſufficient Foundation for Eternal Happineſs. And what Defects have ſince been introduced, muſt be allow'd by Chriſtians to be ſupply'd by Chriſt: And by his ſupplying thoſe Defects, he has recovered human Nature to its original Capacity. With God's Indulgence and Aſſiſtance, it is again become capable of its firſt Eſtabliſhment, both as to the Me ns and the End. Therefore Chriſtians muſt be inexcuſable, if they don't make good Advances in Virtue; ſuch, as with God's Favour purchas'd by Chriſt, may be a juſt Foundation for Happineſs; and if ſuch Virtue be Eternal, its Happineſs muſt be ſo too. Is it a contemptible Degree of Goodneſs that St. *Paul* had in his Thoughts, when he tells the *Epheſians*, *Epheſ.* 3. he pray'd to God for 'em, *That he wou'd grant 'em according to the riches of his grace, to be ſtrengthened with might by his ſpirit, working upon the inner man; That Chriſt might dwell in their hearts by*

by faith; That they might be filled with all the fulneſs of God?

This Objection muſt owe what Strength it finds in Men, to the Weakneſs of their Spirits, or to the Liſtleſsneſs of their Minds; it muſt receive it from a great Degree of Dejectedneſs, or from a treacherous undervaluing of that which they won't endeavour to attain. Men may certainly qualify themſelves for ſuch Happineſs, as Men can be ſuppos'd to enjoy.

Objection from the Mixture of Good and Evil in Men.

But if it be allow'd poſſible for human Life, upon the Foundation of the Covenant of Redemption, to provide for ſuch Happineſs; it may however be urg'd as an allow'd Fact, that Men are neither entirely good, nor entirely bad; that good Men have ſomething bad in 'em, and bad Men ſomething good: And whether this Mixture be ſuppos'd to continue in a future State, or to be reduc'd to one conſtant, uniform State of Mind, 'twill appear difficult to account for. If it continue, how can Heaven admit the vicious Part, or Hell torment the virtuous? If it be remov'd by ſome over-ruling Influence, why might not the whole Man be diſpos'd and form'd in the ſame Manner?

Anſwer.

In Anſwer to this, we may depend on it, no Violence will be offer'd Nature, no ſupernatural Change will be made: And as to the Continuance of ſuch a Mixture, it muſt be allow'd true in general, that the beſt Men

Men may have ſomething bad, and the worſt ſomething good. But this can't be true as to eſtabliſh'd Habits of either; a wicked Man may be free from ſeveral vicious Habits, but that won't make one virtuous one; and a good Man may want ſome Habits of Virtue, but that don't amount to one vicious one. Again, Each of them may fall into ſeveral Actions, not agreeable to the general Temper of their Minds, and ſuch Actions will weaken the Habits both of the Virtuous and Vicious: And the Conſequence of this will be, that the one will be leſs miſerable, the other leſs happy in a future State. But that Sentence of St. *James*, underſtood as it ought to be, in an habitual Senſe, *He that offends in one point is guilty of all*, will not permit us to ſuppoſe, that a good Man can have any one Habit of Vice, or a wicked Man any one Habit of Virtue.

This Objection therefore, ſo far as it is inconſiſtent with the Continuance of moral Habits in the Soul, is founded on a falſe Fact.

Objection from the Body.

Another Difficulty that may ſeem to lie heavy upon this Principle, is the Dependance which our moral Habits ſeem to have upon the Body.

And as Faith and Hope are at preſent Habits in the Mind, but by the Nature of their Subject can't continue in it; ſo it may be

be allowed to be with ſeveral Habits depending on the Body: The Change of its Conſtitution may deſtroy the immediate Influence of ſuch Habits. But as Faith and Hope proceed from a vertuous Dependance upon God, and have upon that account an Influence on the Mind that will never fail; ſo have likewiſe bodily Habits: Thoſe Vices which can't be practis'd in a future State, leave, however, a ſtrong Influence on the Mind, to its great Prejudice. It is not certain that the Impoſſibility of practiſing the Vices it hath been us'd to, will entirely take off all Inclination to them: The contrary frequently appears in this Life, but perhaps Time might wear out ſuch deſperate Inclinations. But the Weight with which ſuch Habits preſs down the Soul, is this, A fix'd Indulgence of Senſuality, and conſequently, an Averſion to every thing that is meerly Spiritual. In ſenſual Indulgences, we are apt to confine our Thoughts to the Body, as if that only were concern'd in them: But this is entirely unnatural, the Body hath no more Senſe of any thing than common Clay, it is the Soul alone that perceives all our Pains and Pleaſures, and this plainly appears the Minute a Soul leaves its Body: The Soul therefore by ſuch Indulgences, is ſunk beyond Recovery, in habitual Senſuality. And St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 8. 7. gives us a very melancholly Account of ſuch a Mind,

Anſwer.

Rom. 8. 7.

The

The carnal mind is enmity againſt God, for it is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. If ſuch be the general Effect of carnal Habits, 'tis plain, ſuch a Soul muſt be utterly unfit for Heaven, if this Effect remains, though the particular Indulgences that caus'd it can be no more.

And on the contrary, we may make good Additions to ſeveral of our virtuous Habits, by reſiſting and regulating the Affections of the Body. Our Love of God, our Filial Reverence for his Authority and Perfections, and our Diſpoſition for a Spiritual Life; theſe are all ſtrengthen'd by every Conqueſt we gain over any Temptation which thoſe Affections may propoſe.

Thus may the Body occaſion ſuch Habits in the Mind, as will not be looſen'd by its Diſſolution; tho' the particular Actions imply'd, depend entirely on it.

And it is certain, the moſt important Parts of Life do not depend on the Body, any otherwiſe, than as the Mind may be diſturbed by it. It appears therefore as to good Habits, and bad ones too, that many of them will continue unaffected by Death, as depending entirely on the Mind; and the few that will be affected by leaving a Body ſo conſtituted, will be ſucceeded by others, more general and more ſpiritual.

The immediate Cauſe may be removed, but the Effect never will: And as to vicious

ous Habits particularly depending on the Body, they, ſtrictly ſpeaking, muſt be deſtroy'd by Death, but not the Influence they have had. 'Tis killing a Serpent that has ſtung us mortally; the Fatal Miſchief remains.

Objection from Children dying, or Idiots.

The laſt Subject for Doubt or Difficulty relating to this Principle, that I can at preſent apprehend, is the Caſe of ſuch as die Children or Idiots; ſuch as never become capable of moral Habits, either virtuous or vicious. It might be ſufficient to ſtop any Concluſion from hence, to obſerve how ſilent the Scriptures are concerning them. While they are poſitive and frequent in declaring, That none but the Righteous, none but the Faithful ſhall be admitted to Heaven; very little is ſaid of Children; and of Idiots, not one word. If therefore both theſe are happy in a future State, without laying up any Habits of Virtue; ſo they are likewiſe without Faith, or any other Parts of Religion. And yet to other Men 'tis plain theſe are neceſſary: Such Caſes are omitted, as not being within the Rule to be propos'd; not being proper Subjects of it, but to be provided for ſome other way.

The Truth is, ſuch Souls never come to a Probation; they do as it were ſleep in the Body, and having contracted no vicious Habits, they muſt be happy hereafter in their natural Faculties. The Works of God,

as ſuch, are all good; and what Alterations ſoever can be ſuppos'd in human Minds, without their own Conſent, by being meerly join'd to a human Body, this is expiated by Chriſt: They are therefore to be conſider'd as Spirits never incarnate, newly created, juſt enter'd upon Being. And as they muſt be good as being the Works of God, they muſt be happy as being good.

Their Condition therefore is ſo different from the Condition of Men that go through Life, and have the ſeveral Parts of their Nature perfect, that no Concluſion can be drawn from one to t'other.

This Principle, that moral Habits form'd in this Life, remain in the Soul after Death, and are the natural Foundation of Happineſs and Miſery, to which the Goodneſs and Severity of God make ſuch Additions as his Wiſdom recommends; this Principle, great as it is, ſeems ſufficiently founded on the Arguments that have been us'd for it; and ſufficiently ſupported againſt Objections, by the Anſwers that have been given. I ſhall now briefly mention ſome uſeful Concluſions from it.

1. *Concluſion from this Principle.* From hence 'tis plain we act like Children, when we allow our ſelves to complain of any Part of our Duties; they are the neceſſary Steps taken in this Minority of the Soul, for its Education to Eternal Happineſs. What Parent is not ſenſible of the evil

evil Conſequences of Idleneſs and Viciouſneſs in Youth? Who can't foreſee that the Effect of it will be a ſhameful and miſerable Life? As much as the Importance of Eternity exceeds all that is contained in this mortal State, ſo much will its Shame and Miſery abound, if we neglect all proper Proviſion for it. God is pleas'd to make no other Uſe of his Authority, but to preſs us with an affectionate Concern, to mind our moſt neceſſary Buſineſs, to qualify our ſelves for the Happineſs he deſigns us. Were that Happineſs ſuch as might be enjoy'd by careleſs, idle, vitious Minds, it would be of far leſs Value than it is: And can it be thought a Grievance, that we are put upon ſuch Accompliſhments as may qualify us for better?

2. *Concluſion.* On the contrary, This Principle ſhows us the Obligations we are under, to bleſs God with the moſt devout Gratitude, for the Aſſiſtances we enjoy as Chriſtians, to attain ſuch Accompliſhments.

'Tis not to be queſtioned, but the wiſe Lord of Nature obſerves an exact Oeconomy in all Parts of it; as his Servants are qualify'd, they are univerſally preferr'd: Our Happineſs will bear a juſt Proportion to the Diſpoſitions of our Souls. But he is not pleas'd to give the ſame Advantages to all, to form their Minds; he has not explain'd Things to all in the ſame Manner; he has

not vouchſaf'd the ſame Superintendency, the ſame Influence and Application to them all. Chriſtians are for this reaſon call'd his Children, *i. e.* in the *Jewiſh* Phraſe, his Pupils, his Scholars, his peculiar Care, inſtructed and educated by him.

3. Concluſion. And if ſuch be the Importance of the Habits we contract, we ought to watch over our Souls with a godly Jealouſy, that the firſt Beginnings of Corruption may be ſuppreſs'd. Every ſingle Act of Sin is a Step to ſome vicious Habit; and any ſingle Habit of Vice confirm'd in the Soul, and tranſlated with it into the other World, will deſtroy its Happineſs. 'Tis a laſting Reproach to human Nature, *That the children of this world, are wiſer in their generation than the children of light*: Who does not carefully avoid Diſeaſes, as leading to the Chambers of Death? And yet, though the Sting of Death be Sin, how few have equal Apprehenſions of the Danger and Miſchief of Temptations? How few fly from ſuch Infection, and conſult the Health of their Souls?

4. Concluſion. Laſtly, Since our future Happineſs depends ſo much upon the ſettled Temper of our Minds, we are very much concern'd to ſhut our Hearts againſt all treacherous Principles, ſuch as divert us from the real Practice of ſincere Piety and Virtue, and endeavour

deavour to ſatisfy us with ſomething elſe in their ſtead.

Such Principles are of ſeveral kinds, all of 'em ſufficiently abſurd, but all of 'em, for the ſake of Flattery, too readily entertain'd.

How great a Part of the Chriſtian World are now contented with Pardons, Indulgences and Diſpenſations; concern'd for nothing, but keeping fair with thoſe, in whoſe Hands they are; and conforming to the trifling Conditions inſiſted on by them? As if the real Diſpoſitions of their Souls were of no Moment; as if they wanted only the Leave of their Fellow Creatures to take their Place in Heaven; as if Happineſs and Miſery, Virtue and Vice in the other World, depended on nothing but their being plac'd in Heaven or in Hell, as Heat and Cold on the different Climates of the Earth. And too many that are not under ſuch Deluſions, can as effectually delude themſelves with the Externals of Religion.

Theſe are in themſelves of great Uſe, and are eſtabliſh'd by the Wiſdom of Heaven; but they are always to be conſider'd as Means only, to edify Chriſtians, to make them perfect Men in Chriſt: When this End is faithfully purſued, we can't overvalue the Means that lead to it.

But when we conclude, we can effectually recommend our ſelves to God, by conforming to them, without proceeding to thoſe

good Qualities which they were graciouſly inſtituted to promote: This is entirely unnatural, and unworthy both of God and Man.

The Difficulty of forming good Habits.

The laſt Thing I ſhall mention, that may properly be reform'd by this Principle, The Continuance of moral Habits in the Soul; is that treacherous Notion of Repentance, that is too much encourag'd.

This ſeems at firſt to have ariſen from a compaſſionate Tenderneſs for dying Perſons; inclining Men to judge favourably, and to be careful not to ſay any thing, that might be grievous to their dejected Spirits. As to particular Perſons, no Man is qualify'd to determine them; Silence becomes us beſt; we ought to preſume no farther, than to aſſiſt them, and to recommend them to God by our Prayers.

But in general 'tis certain, no Submiſſion, no Devotions, no Severities in afflicting our Souls, nothing of this kind can prevail with God, to diſpenſe with every Thing that is good; and to receive us with all our Vices into Heaven, meerly becauſe we are at laſt afraid of Hell. Let us therefore hear and fear in time: Devotions, to the laſt Minute we are capable of them, have their Uſe; but that Uſe is the ſame in the laſt Minute, that it was in the firſt.

We might as well have pray'd at the Beginning of our Life, that God would excuſe us the Trouble of forming virtuous Ha-

Habits, as we can pray at the End of it, that he would accept us without them.

Without holineſs, by which is meant the whole Syſtem of Piety and Virtue, *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*: Our Imperfections in Virtue may be pardon'd, but Vices muſt be reform'd. I wiſh I cou'd ſay it was eaſy to form virtuous Habits, and avoid all vicious ones; but in ſuch a State as this it can hardly be ſuppos'd.

CHAP. IV.

The Deluſion of a careleſs, ſupine Temper, and the Difficulties in forming a Spirit fit for Heaven, particularly with reſpect to Temptations.

Our Saviour's Caution againſt it.

OUR Saviour, when he had given Direction to his Hearers in a great Variety of Precepts in that excellent Sermon on the Mount, for the Religious Conduct of their Lives, cautions againſt thinking too ſlightly of the Duties it contain'd: He knew the whole would loſe its Effects, if they had not a ſuitable Concern for it: He cautions them therefore, not to imagine that this World was one common Road to Heaven, that they need only conſult their

Eaſe and Pleaſure, and Conveniences in the Way, without any Apprehenſions of being loſt, any Doubt of arriving in due Time at the ſame happy Settlement with the reſt of Mankind. He informs them of many Difficulties, in laying the Foundation of a Chriſtian Happineſs; and many Temptations, to be contented with one that was not ſufficient. The Gate that leads to Life, he tells them, *is ſtreight, and the way narrow*; 'tis laborious and tedious, laying a Foundation in a Rock. And on the contrary, *Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction*; 'tis eaſy and quick Work to lay a Foundation in the Sand, and too many are prevail'd on by the preſent Advantages to neglect the Conſequences, and for want of more Care and Trouble, loſe what they have been at.

Matt. 7.

Luke 13.

The ſad Conſequence.

That many rational Creatures, made in the Image of God, qualify'd by their Nature for the Society of Angels, Inhabitants of that glorious City *not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*; that many ſuch ſhould move only for a ſhort Time upon the Earth, and then drop into it, and from thence to Hell, to be Fellow Sufferers with evil Spirits; a State in which all the natural Perfections of their Minds and Bodies will ſerve only to aggravate their Miſeries, and diſpoſe them to be more affected with their Bitterneſs; this may juſtly be a very great

great Concern to us. But we ought to guard our Hearts againſt all unworthy Reflections; to take care they are not ſurprized into Rebellious Thoughts; that they do not loſe the Reverence that is naturally due to God; that they do not repreſent him as a cruel arbitrary Being, one that takes Pleaſure in the Ruin of his Creatures. We ought to turn our Thoughts to ſuch Things, as ſhow us the Juſtice and Righteouſneſs of God, and the Ingratitude, Baſeneſs and natural Malignity of Wickedneſs, eſpecially in Chriſtians.

God juſtified.

In the Nature of Things, nothing more can be deſir'd by any Creature, than that its Happineſs ſhould depend upon it ſelf, that nothing ſhould be made a Condition of it, but what was agreeable to its Nature, or proper to aſſiſt it as inferior Means; and this is the Chriſtian's Caſe; and the infinite Importance that depends on it, ought to prevail with us to be cautious, very ſincere and faithful to our ſelves; not contented with bare Poſſibilities, when we have the certain Means of Happineſs in our Hands. And if we reſolve to uſe theſe Means, the ſame Reaſons that produce this Reſolution, ought to diſperſe all treacherous Accounts of them, ſuch as may prevent their diſturbing any Courſe of Life we incline to, not extremely ſhocking; ſuch as like the lying Spirit in the Mouth of *Ahab's*

Ahab's Prophets, consult our Humour, and dictate nothing unpleasing or inconsistent with it.

A presumptuous Spirit.

Men's Notions in Religion, are too apt to be influenc'd and infected by their Tempers; while some are too much, others are too little affected with the Terror of the Lord. Some Men of a melancholick desponding Temper, continually torment themselves with unnecessary Fears; others of a bold, presuming Spirit, often outbrave their Consciences, and apprehend no Dangers at the Gates of Hell. The former of these Tempers is much happier than the other, because much safer: It creates indeed a great deal of Uneasiness, which a well-inform'd Judgment might have prevented; but this only makes our Way to Life something streighter than God design'd it, and by that Means robs us of some Conveniences that might have been innocently enjoy'd; but a presumptuous Spirit binds down our Eyes, and leads us directly to Destruction.

Our present Disadvantages.

The Disadvantages we are under in our present Condition, make it necessary for us to exert our best Capacities. The Infirmities and Disorders of our Nature from our Infancy; the State of the World about us, which surrounds us with Temptations in every Part of Life; and the insinuating Nature of Sin, weakening our Souls, and making

making us continually less able to perform our Duty, all these call aloud for Cautiousness and Industry.

We are brought into the World under the influence of various Imperfections: These expose us in our Youth to be practised on by the Devil; he takes Advantage of the Tenderness and Nakedness of our Minds; and where he is not prevented by a careful Education, will be sure to settle such Habits and Inclinations, as will require much Time, much Pains, much Resolution to remove: So much, that not many rescue themselves out of such Snares; too many are prevailed on to be satisfied; few have the Courage to undertake such a Reformation, as must root up the established Habits of their Lives; most are forward to provide suitable Entertainments for their growing Inclinations. To expel the Inclinations themselves, to act the Reserve of so many Years, to forsake the Way in which they have taken so much Pleasure; these are hard Sayings, such as very few are disposed to bear.

On the other Hand, the Devil too often overcomes the Influence of the best Education: If he gets the Ascendant of young Minds, so far as to persuade them to give Ear to his Temptations, and to taste the Pleasures of Sin, he soon diverts them from those Fears, which the Course of their E-

ducation, and the Authority of their Governors had imprinted on their Minds. He can perſuade them, as he did their firſt Parents, that there is nothing in the Cauſes of ſuch Fears, but the Art of Government. By ſuch Means, he too often razes the Foundations of Piety and Virtue, and lays deep and ſtrong ones for a Life of obſtinate Wickedneſs. When ſuch Perſons come afterwards to be engaged in the Buſineſs of the World, or, which is much more dangerous, in its Pleaſures, they are far from enquiring into the Condition of their Souls, far from ſuppoſing they need any Reformation; they are only for changing thoſe childiſh Vices, with which they have hitherto been contented, for others which they think more proper for their Age and Quality.

But if the Influence of a pious Education be preſerved, though we are happily ſet out for a ſerious Life, yet even with this Advantage, we ſhall find Occaſion enough for Care and Diligence. Many are the Sins that will immediately beſet us at our firſt Appearance in the World; we ſhall be immediately engaged in a Multitude of Temptations, every one of which if ſubmitted to, may be ſufficient to deſtroy us: We may perhaps eaſily reſiſt ſome, which by our natural Temper we are leſs inclined to, but we ſhall find others that will be hard enough

nough for our moſt ſerious Reſolutions. And whereever we fail, whenever we conent to any ſingle Vice, this makes a Breach n the Soul, at which a Flood of Wickedeſs will flow in upon us, if it be not ſeaonably repair'd: Every Sin weakens us, nd makes us an eaſier Prey to the next Temptation; Every vicious Compliance eſſens our Apprehenſions of God's Diſpleaure, and makes the Deformity of Vice faniliar, and leaves in the Mind a pernicious nclination; and this Inclination will often tick upon the Soul, when the Act that aus'd it, ſeems to be attoned by Repenance; when the Solemnities of Sorrow nd Submiſſion are performed. Every Act f Sin brings a double Miſchief on the Soul hat commits it, as it provokes the Wrath nd Vengeance of God, and as it wounds he Soul it ſelf; leſſens its natural Perfection, and inclines it to Senſe and Vanity. Confeſſion therefore, though attended with Agonies and paſſionate Outcries for Mercy, will not be ſufficient; the Poiſon that infected the Soul muſt be expell'd, and after ſuch Times we muſt be more careful than ordinary, that we don't relapſe; if we do, both the Guilt and Power of our Sins will be increaſed even by the Solemnity of our Repentance. To ſupport us therefore under ſuch Conflicts with our ſelves, we ſhould frequently inſiſt on the Encouragements and Terrors

The true Concluſion from them.

Terrors of the Lord: Theſe are future and inviſible, but the Influence of Temptations immediately affects our Senſes and Paſſions; and this is a Diſadvantage that nothing can overcome, but a Rational Conviction of the mighty Difference between them; the Eternity and Importance of the one, the ſhort Continuance and Meanneſs of the other: Where this Conviction is wanting, the Mind grows a Stranger to a future State, and may at length be proſtituted without Reſerve, to Senſuality and Vanity.

Tempting Spirits, why permitted.

It may perhaps appear Unaccountable, and has been ſometimes urged as ſuch, that God ſhould permit thoſe wicked Spirits that he expell'd Heaven, to carry on ſuch Licentiouſneſs in doing Miſchief: The Diſorders and Riots they are plainly repreſented in Scripture to occaſion in the World, may ſeem too great to be tolerated. God's Authority, as Governor of the Univerſe, and his Goodneſs as concerned for Mankind, may be ſuppoſed to ſuffer too much by it: Allowing ſuch Rebels to corrupt his Subjects, to diſgrace his Laws, to propagate Rebellion, and bid open Defiance to his Juſtice; all this may ſeem at firſt View not reconcileable to his Nature. Had we not his own Word for it, that all this is permitted, we might be inclined to think it improbable:

But

But ſince we have no Difficulties, no Objections can be of any Force againſt it.

We may however, give our ſelves ſeveral Reaſons for it, and clear our ſelves of all Appearance of Abſurdity. Thoſe Spirits were abſolutely baniſhed Heaven, but were not immediately under their final Doom; this was reſerved to the Judgment of the great Day. In the mean Time therefore, it is but agreeable to God's Dealing with his other Rational Creatures, to permit them ſome Uſe of their Natural Liberty, for which, as well as for their firſt Wickedneſs, they ſhall give an exact Account. *Reaſons for it.*

Again, the Miſchief they do any Man, as to natural Evils, is to be conſider'd as a juſt Puniſhment inflicted by God, and they are to be conſider'd as Inſtruments in his Hands, or at leaſt permitted by him for ſome wiſe Purpoſes.

As to Spiritual Evils, the Wickedneſs they promote, this they are not able to accompliſh of themſelves; they can hurt no Man this Way without his Conſent: And Temptations as well as Sufferings for the Faith, may be made our Glory; they are proper Occaſions for the Exerciſe of Virtue, and may render it more conſpicuous. Such Exerciſe makes it more active and vigorous, it gives it an eſtabliſhed Health; it makes it eaſy and chearful. Such Virtue, accuſtomed to frequent Engage-

ments

ments with its Enemies, and frequently diſciplin'd, will much excel a contemplative Virtue, a Virtue that only thinks and approves of what the other performs; as much as one that has been bred a Man of War from his Youth, excels him that has ſpent his Time in Retirement, in ſtudying the Art of War, without ſeeing an Enemy: The other will practiſe it with much greater Readineſs, and acquire an habitual Courage.

How far the Influence of the Devil may reach, what Power he may poſſibly attain, where the Mind is diſpoſed to favour him, is very hard to ſay. At the coming of Chriſt, his Power was far more Publick and more General than it has ſince been, at leaſt where Chriſtianity has prevailed; he ſeem'd then to have an eſtabliſhed Authority, ſuch an Authority, and ſo eſtabliſhed, that it is repreſented in Scripture under the Notion of a Kingdom. But if we conſider that Exceſs of Riot to which ſome Men run, we can't but conclude 'tis ſtill very great. How this Power is exerciſed, how it influences the Minds of Men, we ſhall never apprehend diſtinctly, till we come to underſtand more of the Nature, and the Actions of Spirits: But ſuch its Influence may be, as to perſuade Men to any Thing, to confine their Thoughts to almoſt what he pleaſes: Tho' his Influence

be at first no more than Persuasion, he afterwards so insinuates himself into the Soul, that he seems to obtain an Arbitrary Direction, and of a fawning treacherous Protector, becomes a Tyrant.

Temptations.

Something of the Process of Temptations may be discovered, from the several Parts of our Nature. 'Tis plain, every Man has the Use of Reason, he can consider and examine what is proposed to him; he is not obliged to chuse without thinking, or to entertain all Things as they present themselves to him; he has a Power of comparing what he has already tried, with what he is at present persuaded to; he can by that Means judge, whether it be convenient to be embraced or not: He can reflect upon the Effects and Consequences, upon the Reasons and Designs of such Actions, as they have been either done, or refused either by himself or others; and so may conclude, whether it be proper for him or not, to resolve on what is offer'd, or whether it really wants no Deliberation, but may safely be received without it. And as all Men have the Use of Reason, so it is certain, they all chuse what they think most for their Advantage; no Man wittingly injures himself; whatever he undertakes, he at that Time thinks his Interest to do: And whatever Inconveniencies or Dangers there are on one Side, he always proposes

ſomething on the other, that does in his preſent Thoughts outweigh them; or elſe he paſſes them by unobſerved, and conſiders only ſo many of them, as the ſeeming Advantages on the other Side more than recompenſe. To chuſe that which we know to be in it ſelf Evil, that which we acknowledge we had better let alone, this is a Contradiction; it is naturally impoſſible. The moſt abſurd Reſolution has always to the Perſon that makes it ſome Appearance of Good, ſomething that promotes his Humour, his Intereſt, or his Pleaſure. Happineſs in general is what all Men propoſe: And yet the Actions they are frequently fond of are ſuch, as they will not pretend to juſtify, if they are ſeriouſly appealed to; they own they ought not to have done them, and yet in a ſhort Time repeat them: If they are urg'd with this Queſtion, Whether they don't think it an imprudent and unreaſonable Choice, to prefer the guilty Pleaſures of this World before the Happineſs of the other, to purchaſe them at the dreadful Rate of the Ruin of their Souls, and the Infliction of Eternal Miſery; they are ready enough to anſwer with great Concern, that they really do; nor do they queſtion, but that in Fact, Eternal Happineſs and Miſery depend on their Conduct. All this is extorted by the irreſiſtible Power of their Spirits, the Force of Reaſon breaking

ing thro' all the Prejudices and corrupt Habits they contract.

When Men have gone great Lengths in Vice, they are carried on, notwithſtanding ſuch accidental Interruptions, by the Influence of ſuch Habits; they ſcarce want Temptations to forward them: But before Vicious Habits are confirmed in the Mind, it may ſeem ſtrange how Temptations are form'd ſo ſucceſsfully. Since moſt wicked Men have every Thing that is proper to make them otherwiſe; ſince they have the Uſe of Reaſon, and can judge of what is propoſed to them; ſince they are under a natural Neceſſity of chuſing of what they think moſt for their Happineſs; ſince they believe in general, that nothing can compenſate the Eternal Wrath of God, nothing be compared to thoſe Rivers of Pleaſures that run at his Right Hand for evermore; It may well be asked, how is it Men are tempted to ſuch Contradictions and Inconſiſtencies, to ſuch mighty Ruin by ſuch Trifles?

After a ſhort general Anſwer to this Queſtion, I ſhall chuſe to explain the Temptations propoſed to Chriſt by the Devil, and Chriſt's Conduct at that Time. That exemplary Paſſage of his Life was recorded, I doubt not, to direct and ſupport Men under ſuch Aſſaults, and is the ſureſt Ground for us to proceed on.

In General, as we have the Uſe of Reaſon to direct us, ſo we have Paſſions too that frequently diſturb us. They propoſe raſh and violent Deſires, without conſulting Reaſon, or ſubmitting to its Authority; they are deſign'd by Nature for very uſeful Purpoſes, but when grown wild for Want of Care, they become dangerous Enemies. Theſe Paſſions are frequently raiſed by the Force of Imagination; for as we are created with a Body as well as a Soul, we have ſuch a Faculty as well as Reaſon; a Faculty that may be better explain'd by the Effects, of which we are conſcious, than by any Words that can be uſed. Our Experience ſhows us we have a Power of receiving Impreſſions from Things that are without us, and retaining thoſe Impreſſions in our Thoughts, and of recollecting and applying them by our Memory: And ſuch Impreſſions have a natural Effect upon our Blood and Spirits, and produce different Paſſions according to the different Diſpoſition of the Man; and where a cautious and prudent Management of this Faculty is wanting, great Confuſion will follow. Again, we live in the midſt of ſuch Things as are continually affecting this Imagination, and thereby continually ſoliciting theſe Paſſions: We can never want Objects of one Kind or other to engage our Minds, to divert the ſtricter Rules and Diſcipline of Reaſon;

Reaſon; and they who are willing to entertain them, at Leiſure to attend upon ſuch Intruders, will ſoon find them increaſe upon Encouragement, engroſs their Time and Thoughts, and grow too bold to be check'd by it. And laſtly, our natural Appetites, if not ſecur'd by a conſtant Care, are ready to betray us: Moſt Sins are built upon the innocent Inclinations of Nature, corrupted and grown wild.

Thus in general it comes to paſs, that Men act contrary to their real Intereſt; they are endued with Paſſions as well as Reaſon, their Imagination frequently excites thoſe Paſſions, the Objects of the World make Impreſſions on their Imagination, and their natural Appetites recommend thoſe Objects; and when Temptations are thus form'd, they amuſe and divert our Thoughts, they bribe and corrupt our Reaſon: And when the Judgment is corrupted, and will give a fair Hearing to the Evidence but on one Side, no wonder Virtue falls a Sacrifice to the Intereſt of Vice, under the Management of the Devil.

Conſideration neceſſary.

In General, the Way to prevent this, muſt be frequent Reflection, a Religious Converſation with our ſelves. This will prevent our growing inſenſibly worſe and worſe, without taking Notice of our Danger: They that have been ſo unhappy, as to reach the utmoſt Pitch of Wickedneſs,

did not begin without ſome Diſturbance; what they commit at laſt with Pleaſure, they could not think on at firſt without Horror: Their firſt Infection was owing to a ſlothful Neglect; and the Guilt this occaſioned, giving them ſome Uneaſineſs, they induſtriouſly avoided all ſerious Reflection, which before they only careleſly omitted; and thus they proceeded in Vice without Interruption: And what was at firſt Infirmity, became at length Preſumption.

This Religious Converſation with our ſelves, will ſettle in the Mind that Reverence for God, which is the Soul of all Piety and Virtue, without which we are dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins. An unthinking, inconſiderate, unconcerned Temper, muſt be the Cauſe of the general Wickedneſs of the World, of all groſs Prophaneneſs, all open Impieties, all common Vices: 'Tis not for want of Conviction that theſe are contrary to God's Laws, that the Generality of wicked Men ſubmit to them: 'Tis Want of Reverence for thoſe Laws, 'tis want of conſidering who that God is, and what Dependance they have on him; 'tis the Want of ſuch Thoughts as theſe, that makes room for ſuch Vices. Should we ask the moſt profligate Chriſtian, whether he believed the Being of a God, a God infinite in Power, Wiſdom and

and Juſtice; a God that created the World, that does at preſent govern and inſpect it, and will one Day judge it, and reward or puniſh all Men according to their Works: Such a Queſtion would, probably, be receiv'd as a ſevere Abuſe, and be anſwer'd with Indignation. And yet, with how much Earneſtneſs ſoever this Belief may be profeſs'd, and notwithſtanding the full Evidence of the Truth, his daily Practice would confound Charity itſelf with Inconſiſtencies, were it not juſtly accounted for from the want of Conſideration. Such Perſons are gradually brought by this to ſuch a State of Mind, as ſeems like the Loſs of Memory; they are ſo far ſtupify'd by corrupt Habits, that tho' they apprehend Things at the Inſtant they are propos'd, and conſent to their Neceſſity, they are immediately diverted by ſomething elſe, and think no more of them.

Very few Tempers can probably be contented under the Encroachments of the Devil: Did they conſider, that every Inch of Ground he gains of them, is ſo much added to their future Miſery, 'twould be too unnatural to be unconcern'd at his Advantages, and ſubmit without Reluctance to his Power. Very few could, probably, bear the Sight of their own Hearts, conſuming by ſenſible Degrees under the Malignity of vicious Habits: But the Uneaſi-

neſs of ſuch a Sight gives their Thoughts a wrong Turn; inſtead of bearing it for the Sake of a Cure, they only avoid it. Would a Parent, when he ſaw his Child ſtruggling for Life, turn his Back, to avoid the Uneaſineſs of the Sight, when he might otherwiſe deliver it?

To ſuch as are in general willing to conſider the Importance of their Conduct, the Importance either of preventing or reforming vicious Habits, the Example of Chriſt under Temptation may be of great Uſe: This, therefore, I ſhall now conſider in all its Parts.

As this Temptation was not accidental, nor at the mere Will and Contrivance of the Devil, but projected and forwarded by the Spirit of God; we may conclude with Certainty, it was not without ſome great and good Ends. Such it may properly be apply'd to, as it diſcovers the Methods, and Wiles, and Devices of Satan, in aſſaulting Mankind; as it directs them to ſuch a Conduct under Temptations, as may prevent their being led captive immediately; and as it ſhows them the Succeſs of a faithful Concern for their Duty, a Deliverance at length from the Importunities of Hell, and a Recommendation to the Friendſhip and Patronage of Heaven.

The

The Deſign of Satan could not probably be, to inform himſelf concerning Chriſt, whether he were indeed the Son of God. That a Meſſiah was promis'd to the World, he certainly was not ignorant; nor could it eſcape him, that he was generally expected about that Time; nor can it reaſonably be queſtion'd, but that he influenc'd the Heart of *Herod* to endeavour his Deſtruction. And had this been his Deſign, it had been fully anſwer'd by what our Saviour ſays in the Seventh Verſe; *It is written, thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* Tempting God, in this Text, is placing too little Confidence in him; deſiring new Proofs for that which was ſufficiently declar'd. Since, therefore, the Subject to which this Text is apply'd, is Chriſt's Character, his being the Son of God; this is a full Aſſurance that he was ſo. He declares herein, it had been made ſo evident, that 'twould be an Affront and Provocation to God, to deſire a Miracle to confirm it. If Satan, therefore, had propos'd Information, he could not have plainer, and therefore would not have proceeded to the Third Effort in this Temptation. *The Deſign, what.*

His Deſign, moſt probably, was to draw Chriſt into Diſobedience, and particularly into Diſtruſt and Idolatry; Two the moſt provoking and moſt malignant Crimes that Man is capable of committing. If the Devil,

Devil, therefore, could have ſucceeded, if he could have prevail'd with Chriſt to conſent to theſe Crimes, he might well expect to diſqualify him for the Work he came about.

It may poſſibly ſeem ſtrange, that this wicked Spirit (who is always deſcrib'd as moſt ſubtle and moſt ſagacious) ſhould attempt thus to pervert Chriſt, if he knew him to be the Son of God: But tho' we ſuppoſe him to have known this, he might not know the compleat Dignity of that glorious Character, but only its Buſineſs upon Earth. He might be concern'd to prevent the Succeſs of this Buſineſs, and not ſuppoſe any Thing in the Character it ſelf eſſentially Divine; any Thing above the Influence of ſuch Temptations as are here propos'd. But ſhould we ſuppoſe him ſenſible of his Eſſential Dignity, ſenſible of this wonderful Union, the Divine and Human Nature co-operating in Chriſt; he might not, however, conclude from it any Impoſſibility of prevailing on the Human. It could not be evident how they were united; and therefore it muſt be uncertain, how great the Influence of the Divine on the Human might be. He had ſeen Chriſt affected with the Infirmities of Humanity: He had at this Time the Importunities of Hunger to build his Hopes on, and might imagine the Divinity ſo far withdrawn, as

to

to afford him an advantageous Opportunity.

But how unreaſonable, how abſurd ſoever ſuch an Attempt ſhould be concluded, it could not be too unreaſonable, it could not be too abſurd, for that diſtracted Spirit to undertake: A Spirit that forfeited ſo glorious an Eſtate by a reſtleſs Pride, by Ambition and Diſcontent, ſuch a Spirit might engage in any the moſt wild and moſt extravagant Enterprize. A Spirit that continually oppoſes God, in order to the Deſtruction of Mankind, without any Poſſibility of Advantage to himſelf; nay, with a certain Proſpect of increaſing his own Miſery; ſuch a Spirit may well be hurry'd by a violent and precipitate Malice, into ſuch Deſigns as have no rational Support, nothing but the Heat of a vicious Imagination, fondly tranſported with gay Scenes of Miſchief.

The Parts of it.

As to the Parts of this Temptation, it ſeems artificially apply'd to all Parts of Human Nature; the Senſes, the Reaſon, the Affections of Mankind. When the Infirmities of Mortality had been ſo far ſuſpended, as to make it poſſible for Chriſt to faſt Forty Days, and were then reſtor'd to their Natural State, the Severity of Hunger muſt probably be very great; and therefore any plauſible Propoſal to procure it Satisfaction, might expect to be eagerly embrac'd.

brac'd. The firſt Thing, therefore, propos'd to him, is this; *If thou beeſt the Son of God, command that theſe Stones be made Bread.* The Piety with which this firſt Temptation was reſiſted, *Man ſhall not live, it is written, by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God*; this ſeems to have directed the Tempter to the Second. The Reſignation herein expreſs'd to the Will of God, as deliver'd in Scripture, ſeems to have prompted him to try what might be done by miſrepreſenting that. Accordingly he proceeds, *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thy ſelf down; for it is written, He ſhall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they ſhall bear thee up, leſt at any time thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone.* Theſe Words, to a careleſs or corrupt Mind, a Mind eaſily ſatisfy'd, haſty to conclude from their Sound, might appear prophetically written for that particular Occaſion, and an Authority that needed no Demur; but Chriſt oppoſes to them this plain Command, *It is written, thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* A ſufficient Proof, that they were craftily miſapply'd.

After this, the Tempter aſſaults his Paſſions; he ſhows him all the Kingdoms of the World, and all their Glory; a pompous Confuſion of Temptations; and inſolently undertakes to make him Lord of

all, would he but fall down and worship him.

From hence we may observe the usual Methods, in which Men are assaulted by those pernicious Spirits. First, They take advantage of our Natural Infirmities. Human Life depends on many External and Uncertain Assistances; and if it be provided with all these, 'tis expos'd continually to many inward Convulsions, and interrupted in the little Happiness it enjoy'd by intestine Disorders. Both these, our constant and our accidental Infirmities, might possibly be improv'd to the Advantage of the Rational and Spiritual Life, to lessen the Interest of this World, and to increase our Concern for the other. But they are generally apply'd quite otherwise: Our accidental Infirmities, *i. e.* such as do not proceed from any necessary or regular Causes; but however, either naturally from the Weakness of this mortal Constitution, or else judicially from the Dispensations of Providence; that is, all Distempers and all Misfortunes incident to Life: These, instead of humbling and spiritualizing the Mind, as they ought to do, too often raise most undutiful Resentments, Impatience and Murmurs; Frowardness, Malignity and Reproaches, dispensing Reflections both on Heaven and Earth in the Gall of Bitterness, looking enviously both on God and Man

Men, how assaulted.

1. *In their Natural Infirmities.*

Man as Enemies. Such a State of Soul, tho' expreſs'd in no outward Actions, is moſt unchriſtian and unnatural: Such Spiritual Wickedneſs, without groſs or carnal Vices, muſt alienate the Soul entirely from God; it muſt naturalize it to Hell, the Society of thoſe malignant Spirits, that have work'd it up to that Temper. Such a Meaſure of Succeſs, it is to be hop'd, is not common; but 'tis reaſonable to ſuppoſe, the Devil attempts to raiſe ſuch Thoughts on all ſuch probable Opportunities. If Men appear oppreſs'd by the Severity of God, 'tis obvious for him to inſinuate his wicked Suggeſtions; and if he ſucceeds in this, ſcarce any Principles can ſtop him.

But our conſtant Infirmities give him more univerſal Advantages: Natural Wants, and all the Appetites that importune us to ſupply them, are ſo many Invitations to him, to try our Weakneſs and his own Strength. From hence proceeds moſt of that Injuſtice that diſturbs and diſgraces human Life: It cannot be ſupported without external Convenience; and but uncomfortably, by what is ſtrictly neceſſary, under ſevere Means of procuring it. This requires a ſtedfaſt Conſcience in a great Part of Mankind to reſiſt Temptations, a faithful Reſignation to Providence, an humble and pious Mind, willing to undergo the Hard-

Hardships of this mortal Life, and satisfy'd with its full Assurance of Immortality. Where these good Qualities are not well establish'd, the uneasiness Men feel from their Wants, and the Opportunities administred by the Devil to supply them without much Trouble, these too often prevail with them to throw off their Dependance upon God, and provide for themselves by unlawful Means.

And the Difficulties such Persons are often under to prevent the Shame or the Vengeance of Discoveries, these are so many fresh Sources of Wickedness; these put them upon the grossest Presumption, either to amuse and blind Suspicion by that most odious Practice of lying, or else to confront and outbrave the Truth of it, by hardy Perjury; two sorts of Wickedness as dishonourable to God, and as mischievous to Mankind, as the Malice of Hell can recommend. A virtuous and pious Soul, an humble and meek, a charitable, righteous and faithful Spirit under the Severities of Life, is certainly in the Sight of God of great Price. And on the contrary, a Spirit that insolently reproaches Providence as partial and unjust in its Disposition; a Spirit that grows Savage and Resolute, as independent of the great Governor of the World, and all the Powers ordain'd by him; such a Spirit must be his utter Abomination: But

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to relieve ſome preſent Grievances, all the Ends of Life are too frequently deſpiſed; if it can but be made to ſit eaſy, the Uſe of it is overlook'd, and all Conſequences diſregarded.

2. In their Affections. Secondly, From the Devil's tempting Chriſt with the Glories of the World, after he had fail'd in applying to his Hunger, we may obſerve another, and that an immenſe Magazine of Temptations, never to be exhauſted. Whatever can be apply'd to ſollicit and delude our Affections, is propos'd for our Deſtruction. If Providence has prevented all Arguments from real Wants, that wicked Spirit can preſent imaginary Wants enough, and their Impreſſions are ſo much the more Inexcuſable, as well as themſelves more Inſatiable, for their being imaginary only. 'Tis commonly ſuppos'd he repreſented to Chriſt, the Kingdoms and Glories of the World in a Viſion; however that was, it is certain, the gawdy Proſpects of Happineſs with which he uſually engages the Paſſions of Mankind, are indeed but Viſionary, only waking Dreams; but ſo much the more dangerous, becauſe they are at Liberty to purſue the Deluſion in good Earneſt: When only the Imagination's harraſs'd, and the Man himſelf ſecure, ſuch accidental Diſorders are innocent and harmleſs; but when he runs into real Miſ-

chiefs

chiefs upon imaginary Views; when he labours to be miserable, spirited on by an Apparition like Happiness, he commonly discovers his Mistake too late.

Such Delusions as these, are Luxury, Covetousness, Ambition, and all Parts of the Pride of Life; and to suppose these haunt only the Rich and the Great, is itself as dangerous a Delusion as any: For from hence all others conclude themselves safe; whereas, in truth, Cottages are as much expos'd to them as Palaces. As the Widow's Mite contain'd more Charity than what others produc'd from their Abundance; so on the contrary, all sorts of Vices may be express'd and indulg'd in the same comprehensive, though compendious Manner. So far as the Soul is concern'd, all Mankind are on a Level; they have all the same Virtues to practise, the same Vices to avoid. These Virtues and Vices appear indeed in very different Dresses, and have very different External Effects, according to Men's Conditions, according to their Characters and Relations in the World; but when we consider them as Habits in the Mind, as Virtues and Vices, they require nothing but the same World, and the same rational Nature to make all capable of the same Degrees of them. As for Instance, to make this somewhat plainer; a little better Food than ordinary may be eat with a more luxu-

rious Senſuality than the moſt expenſive Entertainments of thoſe that would deſpiſe it; and ſuch an Increaſe of Subſtance as would be look'd on by the great Dealers in the World, after all its Advances, as abject Poverty; ſuch a mean Increaſe may nouriſh more Covetouſneſs, a more ſlaviſh and uſeleſs Affection for it, than the greateſt Riches: And a Contention among the meaneſt Neighbours who ſhall be moſt conſiderable, tho' inconſiderable at moſt, this may contain more Pride, and more Ambition, than the moſt important Quarrels among Neighbouring Princes. In ſhort, as no Man can imagine a Sot excuſable, meerly becauſe he was not made ſo by the richeſt Wines; ſo none of theſe Vices are to be concluded the more innocent, meerly becauſe their Materials are mean. God ſearches the Heart, and judges of the Man by that: Such Vices therefore may be univerſal, they are incident to all Conditions, though their Names may ſeem to be above ſome. And from the ſeveral Things that miniſter to theſe or ſuch like Vices, the Devil is induſtrious to ſupply all Sorts of Men with Temptations.

3. *In their Judgments.* Thirdly, We may obſerve, that as the Devil formerly carry'd on a Correſpondence with Mankind by Oracles, perſonating Truth and a Divine Authority; ſo he ſtill applies to thoſe, who are not otherwiſe to

be deluded, by perverting Scripture, by amuſing and miſleading well-meaning Minds by falſe Arguments from thence. If he can't perſuade us to throw off God, he endeavours to perſuade us into ſuch Notions of our Duty, as may prevent our enjoying the true Fruits of it. It is written, ſays he to Chriſt, *He ſhall give his Angels charge concerning thee*: How many Enthuſiaſts have reſigned themſelves in an Extaſy, to Arguments leſs plauſible than this?

By ſuch Arguments variouſly apply'd, according to the various Tempers and Conditions of Men; he has rais'd all thoſe unhappy Contentions about the Principles of Religion, that have ſucceſſively diſturb'd all Ages; and by ſuch Arguments he has countenanc'd ſuch Practices too, as are unworthy of a rational Nature. Upon ſuch Authorities as theſe, ſome have plac'd themſelves in the Throne of God, uſurp'd his Attributes, exercis'd both a Temporal and Spiritual Tyranny over his Church; and paſt arbitrary Sentences of Eternal Damnation on the pureſt Part of it. Others have turn'd the Grace of God into Laſciviouſneſs; made the Favour of the Goſpel a Licenſe to Sin; imputed their Salvation entirely to Chriſt, and then proſtituted their Nature to all vile Affections. Others have eſtabliſh'd themſelves as the Favourites of God; have been very ſure they ſaw their Names writ-

ten in the Book of Life, and cannot poſſibly fail of an Inheritance purpoſely provided for them, and ſome few others ſo happy as to be enter'd with them: Thus diſgracing the Merits of their Redeemer, by confining him to an inconſiderable Number; thus ſtarving their own Piety and Virtue by Security. Others on the contrary, are perſuaded they read their Doom in every Page of thoſe Sacred Records; and in Conſequence of that Perſuaſion, reſign themſelves to the Wrath of God as irrecoverably loſt; not that their Conſciences accuſe them of any thing that deſerves ſo deplorable a State, or can juſtify ſuch a Concluſion; but only upon ſome general Declarations which they unmercifully turn upon themſelves; and ſo both diſhonour God, and loſe all the Means of Grace in Deſpair. And to mention no more, upon ſuch Authorities, many vicious Chriſtians ſilence the Remonſtrances of their Conſcience: 'Tis eaſy to find out ſome Text or other that has a favourable Sound; or at worſt, to appeal to ſome Example in the Scriptures, wherein the ſame Sins have been committed by Perſons never caſt out of God's Favour, and in general of Characters truly exemplary. Such were the Temptations of Chriſt, and ſuch is the uſual Courſe of Temptations among the Bulk of Mankind.

And from our Saviour's Conduct under theſe Temptations, we may conclude Rules for our own, and apply them according to the State we live in. It may poſſibly be thought no Conſequence from Chriſt to us: But it ought to be obſerved in general, what perſonal Advantages ſoever Chriſt had, the Temptations he was expos'd to, were proportionably great: As we have not the ſame Strength, ſo we have not the ſame Weight of Temptations to ſuſtain. But more particularly, we may obſerve, theſe Temptations are apply'd to Chriſt as Man; the Infirmities of his human Nature were depended on; and theſe Infirmities we are aſſur'd were the ſame with ours, Sin only excepted. And again, Our Saviour's Anſwers are all taken from Scripture, from ſuch Authorities as are common to all Mankind: He does not inſiſt on any Prophecies particularly directed to himſelf; he oppoſes only general Precepts, ſuch as were written to be a Rule to us, rather than to him: From hence therefore we may learn what Reſiſtance to make to the like Intrigues. If theſe Texts of Scripture are properly apply'd by Chriſt, and are dictated as Rules and Authorities for us, as well as for him, which doubtleſs they are, then, whenever our Condition is the ſame, whenever we are engag'd in the like Temptations, the ſame Anſwers are proper to be made; and if faithfully inſiſted on, will

Rules for our Conduct.

certainly have the same Success. What we conclude justly and regularly from this Example, may be depended on as a sound Principle, and will never fail us in Practice: Let us therefore consider and apply the Particulars.

1. *Submission to God.*

First, When the Devil perswaded our Saviour to Impatience, and propos'd such a Method for his Relief, as look'd like Independence and Self-sufficiency; he tells him, it is written, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*; and to this Authority he submits without Reserve. From hence we may form our own Temper, under all kinds of Hardships and Afflictions. This Answer establishes that most comfortable Principle, a particular Providence; 'tis a plain Assurance, that all Parts of the World are inspected and dispos'd by God; a Consideration of more Moment in favour of human Life, and more to its Honour, than any thing else that can be said for it, any thing short of Immortality. This Providence is here likewise represented as Almighty and Expeditious; a single Word of God's, determines any Part of the Creation immediately: This Expression seems to be chosen, to represent the Force of God's Will; because in reference to human Power, it carries with it the greatest Importance of Majesty. Thus *Moses*

Moſes chuſes to expreſs the Influence of God at the Creation, *Let there be Light*; an Expreſſion remark'd by one of the beſt Maſters of Rhetorick, as truly great, truly ſublime.

Theſe Words, *Man ſhall not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God*, being taken by our Saviour from the Writings of *Moſes*, from *Deut.* 8. 3. 'tis reaſonable to give them the ſame Force they have there; and with this Force, they dictate to us theſe Two Things: Firſt, Whatever the preſent Poſture of our Affairs be, if it be not the Effect of our own Vices, it is the Will of God; they are ſo diſpos'd by him. Secondly, Whenever he pleaſes, they are inſtantly reform'd; nothing can reſiſt or retard his Will: And therefore, if it be agreeable to his Wiſdom, we may continually expect a Reformation; and if it be not, we ought not to deſire one.

From theſe Two Principles, an implicit Reſignation to God will unavoidably follow. While we continue in this Vale of Tears, Afflictions will make us feel them; and Nature will hardly be reſtrain'd from expreſſing ſome Senſe of them; but our Reaſon and Religion ſhould be always ready to keep her within Bounds, and to diſtinguiſh between Nature and Humour. The only Excuſe for any Meaſure of Grief in ſuch *Afflictions.*

Caſes, is, that 'tis natural: As ſuch, it muſt not be condemn'd; but when it grows paſſionate and clamorous, it borders ſo near upon Blaſphemy, it ought to be ſtrictly guarded. It may, however, ſeem more excuſable than groſs Injuſtice, as being leſs deliberate. All Impatience, in whatever Condition God places us, is remonſtrating againſt his Government, and, as ſuch, guilty enough: But Injuſtice is bidding him Defiance; 'tis taking Things from him by Violence; 'tis throwing off our Dependance, and reſolving (like thoſe deſperate Spirits that perſuade us to it) to gratify our preſent Inclinations, and ſtand boldly to the Conſequence. But who, that conſiders what that Conſequence is, can ſatisfy himſelf with ſuch a Proſpect?

A mean Condition.

The Inequalities in the Diſpoſitions of this World, tho' in its Nature abſolutely neceſſary, are miſrepreſented and aggravated by the Devil, on purpoſe to raiſe ſuch Paſſions in us, and thereby hurry us to Deſtruction: But whenever we feel ſuch Thoughts riſing in our Breaſts, we ſhould conſider againſt whom they riſe. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealouſy? Are we ſtronger than he?* Can thoſe wicked Spirits, whoſe Counſels we follow, defend us from his Vengeance? Or can the Satisfaction of our preſent Humours balance its Terrors? Or can we doubt that the Order of the World,

World, of which our own Condition is Part, is indeed of God's Appointment? We are not left in this Caſe to Natural Probabilities, darken'd and puzzled by ſeeming Contradictions and Inconſiſtencies: We are fully aſſur'd of an exact Providence; for, it is written, it is declar'd to us by plain and poſitive Revelations. To this, therefore, our Saviour directs us under all Temptations of this Kind; whatever Severities we feel, to conclude them the Injunctions of God, and (as ſuch) to ſubmit dutifully to them, till he is pleas'd to direct ſome lawful Means for our Relief.

2. A pious Uſe of a plentiful Fortune.

Secondly, As a mean or an afflicted Condition is expos'd to the Temptations of Blaſphemy and Diſhoneſty, ſo a plentiful Fortune is eaſily deluded with Luſt and Vanity. As our Saviour was carry'd up to a high Mountain, to enlarge his Proſpect; ſo it commonly happens, that the higher Men riſe in the World, the larger Views they have, the more Objects to ſet their Hearts on, more extenſive Schemes to finiſh; and every Step they take, by raiſing them higher ſtill, preſents them with new Temptations.

Our Saviour's Anſwer in this Caſe, thus tempted to worſhip the Devil, directs us to a comprehenſive and noble Principle, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only*

ly ſhalt thou ſerve. Covetouſneſs, that is, an inordinate Affection for this World, an inſatiable Purſuit of Temporal Advantages, this is by St. *Paul* expreſly call'd *Idolatry.* Tho', perhaps, it enters into no Covenants with the Devil, or does not worſhip him in Perſon, 'tis effectually devoted to his Influence; and is therefore probably preferr'd by him to outward Worſhip, as much as every End is preferable to its Means. They live in as much Devotion to the Devil, who give themſelves up to *the Luſts of the Fleſh, the Luſts of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*; as if they built Temples to him, and lay proſtrate at his Altars. And as 'tis reaſonable to interpret the worſhipping of the Devil in this large Senſe, ſo 'tis reaſonable likewiſe to interpret the Worſhip of God, that's oppos'd to it, in the ſame manner. And in this Senſe of it, our Saviour directs us to fix it in our Hearts, as the End of Life, to recommend our ſelves to God. Whatever Variety of Buſineſs or Diverſion our Lives may be engag'd in, to remember that all ought to center in this: That our Souls ſhould be frequently call'd off, and reminded of this great End, That Religion, *i. e.* a proper Accompliſhment of our Nature for Immortality, as it was the Deſign of our Creator in placing us upon Earth, ſo 'tis the only Thing worth living for,

for, and ought therefore to command the whole Heart.

'Tis true, the Infirmities of our Nature will lead our Thoughts into innumerable Channels; inconsiderable indeed, compar'd to that; but however, all of this Kind that can be justify'd, flow from that, and return to it. They are the Under-Parts of Life, and have their Uses.

When a pious, sober Mind directs all to the Glory of God, as free from Enthusiasm as from Vice, then the common Actions of Life are Virtues; they are all animated by the Spirit of Religion, as the meanest Part of the Creation has God's Presence. But when we suffer our selves to be amus'd with the Entertainments of the World, when we live not by Nature, but by Humour, not by the Counsels of God, but by the Opinions of Men, or Suggestions of Devils; not to improve our Souls, but to keep them from thinking of all Things that tend to it; we are then contented to live *without God in the World*, and transform our selves into Creatures quite different from what he made us.

The several Passions of Human Nature are continually solicited to some Degrees of this, by the common Blessings of Life, and are continually in Danger of being carried from one Degree of it to another: We may perhaps for some Time be only divert-

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ed from our Religious Inclinations, but the Conſequence of this will ſoon appear; Vicious Habits will ſoon ſucceed them. As the Spirit of Religion fails, that of the World will increaſe upon us, as naturally as Darkneſs does upon the Earth, as the Sun leaves it. There is nothing in the Nature of theſe Bleſſings themſelves, till mix'd with the Corruptions of ours, that is either miſchievous or dangerous: But however it comes to paſs, if the Bleſſings of God become our Curſe, how bitter is that Curſe! Therefore to prevent ſuch Abuſe of them, this Principle on which our Saviour inſiſted, *To worſhip the Lord our God, and ſerve him only*; to convert all our Affections to his Honour, to make his Favour our Sovereign Ambition, and to purſue it with an entire, conſiſtent, ſteady Zeal; this Principle ſhould be written on our Hearts, and made as familiar to us as our Names. We might then thankfully enjoy the Liberality of Providence without any Danger of Extravagance; we ſhould then make the Bleſſings and Comforts of this World, the Subjects of Devotion, and Materials of Virtue.

3. *A careful Uſe of Scripture.*

Thirdly, As the Devil perverts the Favours of Providence deſign'd for our preſent Happineſs, ſo he perverts likewiſe the Scriptures deſign'd for our Eternal Happineſs; he perverts them to miſlead us ſometimes

times in Principles, and ſometimes in Practice, as he can take Advantage of Tempers or Occaſions.

From our Saviour's Conduct, when thus aſſaulted, we may learn not to be concluded immediately by the Appearance of any ſingle Text, but to compare one Part of Scripture with another; to beſtow ſuch Care, ſuch Attention, in order to underſtand its true meaning, as may juſtify us to God, and our own Conſciences, if we ſhould miſtake it. The Scripture, we may depend on it, never contradicts it ſelf, and therefore, whenever any two Texts appear inconſiſtent, we may ſafely conclude, either the one or the other muſt be miſinterpreted or miſapplied. In order therefore to determine between two ſuch Texts; if the Subject of them be a Point of Doctrine, and can't be decided by others that are plain, our ſafeſt Appeal is to the Attributes of God: That Senſe which appears moſt agreeable to them, is moſt likely to be true; and that which is contrary to any one of them is certainly falſe. If the Point in Queſtion be practical, if we enquire concerning the Lawfulneſs of ſomething propoſed, this ſeems to be a ſafe Rule: If what we think juſtified in one Place, ſeems to be forbid in another, we ought to be govern'd by that which ſeems to forbid it, and not take a doubtful Liberty: Accordingly, on the o-

ther Hand, if we think we are encouraged in one Place to neglect any Thing, and appear in another to be commanded it, it is Prudence as well as Piety to do it: Such was our Saviour's Conduct throughout the Courſe of theſe Temptations, and his Example is unexceptionable.

The laſt thing to be obſerved in this remarkable Part of our Lord's Hiſtory, is the Encouragement we have to inſiſt on theſe Rules; The Succeſs of his Conduct; the Devil left him, and Angels came, and miniſtred unto him.

In Conſequence of a ſincere Dependance on Providence, a faithful Reſignation to God, and a ſtedfaſt Reſolution to hold faſt our Integrity, we ſhall recommend our ſelves to his Favour, and ſhall certainly enjoy the Fruits of it, tho' perhaps not exactly in our own Way: If our humble Submiſſion to Providence, muſt immediately alter its Meaſures, it muſt at the ſame Time prevent the wiſe Ends propoſed by it; thoſe Caſes only excepted, in which that Submiſſion it ſelf was its only End. How great ſoever our Diſtreſs, how fervent ſoever our Piety and Zeal, we muſt not always expect Angel's Food, nor always providential Medicines: 'Tis Encouragement enough to be faithful and conſtant in our Duty, that God exerciſes in the World a particular Providence,

dence, and that all Things work together for good for thoſe that love him.

Accordingly, in any other State, as the Bleſſings of Providence, in whatever Meaſure they are dealt to us, are not deſign'd by it to enſnare us, ſo we may reſt aſſur'd, it is poſſible to make them not only innocent but uſeful; and if we are honeſt to our ſelves, we may depend upon ſuch Aſſiſtances, as will effectually ſecure us, if we don't betray our ſelves, and thereby make all Aſſiſtances uſeleſs. We are in the Hands of a faithful Creator, a Creator that will never leave us nor forſake us; never as long as his Protection is accepted, and not expoſed by Treachery to Contempt.

And again, as our Nature was not originally deſign'd to be infallible, it muſt be poſſible for the Devil to lead us into Miſtakes; but then on the other Hand, as the Scriptures were revealed to lead us into all neceſſary Truth, it cannot be permitted to that wicked Spirit, ſo to eclipſe their Light, as to make it inſufficient for that End: A proper Diligence and Sincerity in our ſelves, is therefore all that can be wanting. Where theſe are preſerved, though Legions of Devils ſhould uſe all their Art to obſcure that Light, the Chriſtian will always be able to remove the Veil, to let in enough to diſcover his Duty, enough to diſcern that Beauty of Holineſs which they endea-

endeavour'd to conceal; enough to expose their own Deformities, and put them to flight with Shame and Indignation.

Thus may this Example of our Saviour's be useful to us in a great Variety of Cases, and we should apply it faithfully, as our Circumstances require; and if we do, we shall find no Reason to complain, that God suffers the Devil to attack us; *we shall be more than conquerors through Christ that strengthens us*: But we may see Reason enough from hence to live upon our Guard.

CHAP. V.

Integrity in our Duty absolutely necessary. No Part can be dispensed with. The Allegiance of the Heart. Conscience explained.

AS any one vicious Habit must be consider'd as a single Path in that broad Way that leads to Destruction, so every irregular Practice, if continued, will contract some such Habit. We are not to engage in any

any Thing, the Innocence of which we are not well assur'd of, much less any Thing that we condemn in our Hearts: *Whatever is not of faith is sin*; whatever it be in it self, it is Criminal to us; both with respect to God's Authority, and the Influence it has upon our Souls. The Authority of God over the most secret Thoughts, is more insisted on under the Gospel, than it was under the Law; but if both had been silent, Nature it self would have proclaimed it. If Hypocrisy be so odious to God as the Scriptures teach us to think it, then certainly, doing what we suppose unlawful, must be much more so: The Hypocrite does what is in it self Good, nor does he condemn it in his Heart for Evil, and yet he is justly punished; tho' nothing be wanting but Sincerity, yet the Want of that makes his Service an Abomination to the Lord; because it supposes him fallible; it implies a Declaration against his Omniscience; and practising that which we are convinc'd in our Conscience is unlawful, implies the same; and not only so, but we wilfully do what we think forbid by him, and thereby rebel against his Authority; we actually refuse to be govern'd by him; in Opposition to what our Conscience tells us is his Will, we resolve to live by our own Humour: If to gratify our malicious Resentments, we treacherously convey into

the Bowels of another what we think Poiſon, we are certainly Murderers, though it ſhould prove a Cordial, though it ſhould ſave that Life which we purpoſed to deſtroy. As the Body without the Soul is dead, ſo all our Actions without Thought are inſignificant, no better than the Motions of ſenſeleſs Matter; it is that gives Life and Meaning to them all: And therefore, however they may be underſtood by Men who can ſeldom penetrate the Heart, God interprets and judges of them by the Diſpoſition of the Soul it ſelf; and whoever does what he thinks contrary to God's Command, ſhall be puniſhed for deſpiſing his Authority, though the Thing it ſelf be enjoyned by that Authority.

And the Influence ſuch Actions have upon the Soul, though not exactly the ſame as if the Actions were materially vicious, is however very bad. They as effectually ſettle in it an habitual Enmity towards God, and a corrupt Friendſhip with the World. That which is our Nouriſhment when the Body is well diſpoſed, may be Fuel to Diſtempers; that which is our Duty when rightly underſtood, may corrupt a Soul that miſtakes it; ſo that not only Things that are indifferent may become ſinful by our Apprehenſions of them, but ſuch likewiſe as are really good. As he that tells Things which he thinks falſe, with a Deſign to impoſe

impoſe on others, is guilty of violating the Authority of God, which obliges every Man to ſpeak the Truth; and will by Degrees contract a Habit of lying, tho' he deceive only himſelf, and the Things prove true; ſo it is likewiſe in all other Inſtances. Whatever we do contrary to the Judgment of our own Conſciences, muſt offend God, and corrupt our Souls.

And yet it will not follow from hence, that what we are perſuaded in our Minds is agreeable to God's Will, is therefore innocent; that what we do with a pious Intention, is therefore virtuous: It certainly is not ſo criminal to miſtake our Rule, as wilfully to deſpiſe it; but Miſtakes in important Subjects may be criminal enough, when we have not ſo much Regard to God's Authority, as to endeavour to inform our ſelves right in what it has enjoyned; or when we have not preſerved in our Minds, ſo much Reverence for the Matter of God's Laws, as to be careful that nothing prevails with us to ſupplant them, no wordly Intereſt, no favourite Paſſion, no ill-govern'd Inclination. When we have uſed all reaſonable Care not to be miſtaken, the Intention it ſelf may be rewarded, though the Action may have ill Conſequences. If an Impoſtor dreſſes up his Caſe in all the natural Motives of Compaſſion, and ſo contrives it as to deceive a prudent

Caution; the Support of ſuch a Cheat is plainly miſchievous, but the Charity beſtowed on him ſhall not loſe its Reward. But it will by no Means follow from ſuch Caſes, that we may depend on it as a general Rule, that what is agreeable to our Conſcience, or what we are perſuaded in our Judgment is lawful or good, will upon that Account be ſo eſteemed by God: Tho' on the other Hand it be a Rule without Exception, that whatever we do in our Conſcience think Evil, will be always ſo to us, while we continue under that Perſuaſion.

And becauſe ſo much depends on Conſcience, and great Diſorders may ariſe from its not being duly regulated, I ſhall here ſubjoyn an Account; Firſt, of the Nature of Conſcience; Secondly, of the Rule by which it ought to be directed; and Thirdly, of the proper Objects of its Care. Firſt, Conſcience is that Power, that Habit, or that Employment of the Mind, by which a Man in Reaſoning with himſelf, applies what Light, or what Thoughts he has, to his Moral or Religious Actions, whether paſt, preſent or future, and compares 'em with their Rule.

Firſt, Conſcience is a Power, a Habit, an Employment of the Mind: As there are ſeveral Members apply'd to their proper

Uſes, and diſtinguiſhed by their ſeveral Names, and yet are none of them diſtinct from the Body; there are likewiſe in Man ſeveral Habits, ſeveral Faculties or Powers, uſefully diſtinguiſhed in our Thoughts or Expreſſions, which however make but one Rational Soul, but one Human Mind. Accordingly, when a Man recollects his paſt Actions, or conſiders his preſent, or his future, and compares them with the Rule of his Duty, this is properly Conſcience.

From whence we may obſerve, Conſcience is not any Thing diſtinct from the Mind, but only a Name given to this particular Employment of it: 'Tis too often ſpoke of, as if Men had two Souls; one for the Buſineſs of this Life, and one for the Buſineſs of the other. 'Tis too often repreſented as a Sovereign Prince within us, whoſe Dictates are abſolutely infallible, and not to be diſputed. And it is plain, this Employment of the Mind is Reaſoning, concluding our Actions either agreeable to the Rule or not, and therefore Good or Evil. An inward Conviction concerning meer Facts, is ſometimes called Conſcience; but without comparing them with our Moral or Religious Rule, it is no more than Memory. And the proper Buſineſs of Conſcience being ſuch Reaſoning, this ſhows us, we cannot excuſe our ſelves from the Guilt of any evil Action,

by ſaying we were perſuaded in our Conſcience we ought to do it. Unleſs we have conſulted our Rule to the beſt of our Capacity, or at leaſt, with as much Care as the Subject could deſerve, we muſt be accountable for the Conſequence. But however, Conſcience can apply only our preſent Light, only ſuch Knowledge, ſuch Inſtructions as we have. When we have conſider'd thoſe Laws of God, which relate to thoſe Actions in which we would be ſatisfied; when we have examin'd, whether thoſe Actions are agreeable to thoſe Laws or not; this Application, and the Concluſion we make from it, muſt determine us; and if we have faithfully made the beſt Uſe we could of our Judgment, God will accept our Endeavours, and pardon our Miſtakes. The Thoughts we at preſent receive from what Light we enjoy, muſt direct our Practice; but that Practice will not be innocent, if we have ſuffer'd that Light that directs us, to be clouded by Prejudice or Paſſion, or almoſt extinguiſhed by Negligence. Laſtly, The Province of Conſcience contains all our Moral or Religious Actions[3], whether paſt, preſent, or future. Our Conſcience recollects and examines our paſt Actions, in order to reform what has been done amiſs; and ſuch as are preſent or future, it conſiders, in order to regulate them in Time, by ſome

juſt

juſt Authority, to prevent their falling under the Tyranny of Humour or Cuſtom, of Paſſion, or of Intereſt.

This Authority is the proper Rule of Conſcience; and it is in general the Will of God, by whatever means it is made known, or deliver'd to us. *Its Rule.*

This Will of God, which is in all Things the Rule of our Conſcience, is ſometimes diſcovered by the Voice of Nature, the Light of Reaſon. The *Gentiles*, ſays St. *Paul*, Rom. 2. 14. *are a law unto themſelves, which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs.* And it is likewiſe true of all Men, that what Concluſions they rightly make from Reaſon, are as much the Will of God, and therefore as much the Rule of their Conſcience, as any thing pronounc'd to them by a Voice from Heaven. *Natural Reaſon.*

But the moſt immediate Rule is Revelation. To us the Scriptures are a plain and full Direction. *Revelation.*

The Old Teſtament, in ſuch Things as are of a Moral and Eternal Nature, is a ſtanding Rule, and is confirm'd by the Authority both of Nature and the Goſpel: But great Part of it was peculiar to the *Jews*, and therefore not the Will of God with reſpect to Chriſtians. *The Old Teſtament.*

The New Teſtament. The New Teſtament therefore is our moſt compleat Rule; and its Contents are of two Sorts: 1. Such Things as are proper to it ſelf, ſuch as we could not have known, or not been oblig'd to, but by ſuch a Revelation: And, 2. Such Things as are common to it with the Old Teſtament and the Light of Nature. In the firſt of theſe, 'tis a Rule of Conſcience abſolute and indiſputable; as in all Articles of Faith; and ſuch practical Duties as are peculiar to Chriſtianity. To ſatisfy us in theſe Things, what we ought to believe and practiſe, we need look no farther than the true Meaning of the Words of Scripture. As to the ſecond, The common Duties of Life, theſe are commanded us in general Precepts: We muſt direct our Conſcience in particular Actions, by comparing them in all their Circumſtances, to theſe general Rules. Every one muſt ſee, it was not poſſible for the Scriptures to determine the particular Actions of all Mens Lives, any other way, but by general Precepts, which they muſt apply by their own Reaſon. Laſtly, The Will of God is frequently deliver'd to us, by the *Relations.* Circumſtances and Relations in which his Providence has plac'd us: 'Tis true of all Degrees of Obligations, *He that reſiſteth, reſiſteth the ordinance of God.* Relative Duties are as much the Will of God as others. To injure the Right or Authority of thoſe who

who have a juſt Claim on us, is an undutiful Diſturbance of Providence.

But in all theſe Caſes, we muſt have this Caution ready, That what is demanded of us be not contrary to any Part of the Will of God, declared to us either by Scripture or Nature. Though God may have given others in ſeveral ways, ſome Right, ſome Authority over us, to which, in their proper Bounds we ſhould ſubmit, not only for Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience ſake; yet he never gave them Authority to contradict himſelf; and therefore their unlawful Demands are not the Will of God, and conſequently, not the Rule of our Conſcience. *Caution.*

The only thing remaining to be obſerv'd of Conſcience, is, that it reſpects our Moral or Religious Actions only. All our Actions are not properly under the Direction of Conſcience; they may all be brought under it by general Rules, and by remote Conſequences; as every Man is oblig'd in Conſcience to direct his Actions to that End which God propos'd in his Creation. But many Particular Thoughts and Actions proceed immediately from the natural Conſtitution of our Minds and Bodies; and as they don't require, ſo they don't admit Deliberation. Of this ſort are all natural Appetites; in which our Conſcience is no otherwiſe concern'd, than as it muſt regulate the Satisfactions we allow them: They are *Its Objects.*

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themſelves in a moral Senſe neither good nor bad. And many others, though ſubject to our Will and Choice, are of ſo ſmall Moment, ſo little depends on them, that ſhou'd they be concluded worthy of the ſerious Concern of our Conſcience, our Life wou'd be loaded, and our Time taken up, with a Multitude of trifling, inſignificant Enquiries; and while we were thus employed, weightier Matters muſt be neglected; while with the *Phariſees* we ſtrained at Gnats, we ſhould with them too ſwallow Camels. As our Eyes are not made to take notice of the ſmalleſt Objects in Nature, ſo neither is our Conſcience immediately concern'd in the ſmalleſt Actions. Its proper Objects are ſuch Things as theſe: 1. The Effects of a voluntary Choice: And 2. Matters of Duty. They muſt be the Effects of a voluntary Choice, becauſe Conſcience conſiſts in Reaſoning: They muſt be Matters of Duty, becauſe the Rule of this Reaſoning is the Will of God.

Under this Head it muſt likewiſe be inſiſted on, that the Soul may be reſigned to God, and have a conſtant Regard to him in all our Conduct; we muſt not be contented with an external Innocence, a plauſible Converſation, a decent Abſtinence from groſs Vices; we are not to conſider our ſelves only as living among Men, but as living under

nder the Government and Inſpection of he greater Searcher of Hearts.

There are many Sins, and thoſe of the moſt grievous and moſt malignant Nature, hat may be committed without the Concurrence of the Body, without any external Actions; and thoſe that can't be ſo committed formally, can't have their Exiſtence, may however be eminently committed, by having the Conſent and Deſire of the Soul. An outward Conformity to God's Laws, has regard only to the Judgment of Men, and from them only can it reaſonably expect Reward. We muſt abſtain from actual Wickedneſs, not out of ſhame, or fear of human Vengeance, but in the Integrity of our Hearts. A ſincere Reſpect for Virtue, a filial Reverence for God, muſt be made our Sovereign Principle. We may give all our Goods to feed the Poor, and have no Charity; we may our ſelves be Objects of it, deſtitute of all things, and yet eminently charitable. We are too apt to be impoſed on by Words and Shadows; but the Eſſence and Subſtance of human Good and Evil are in the Heart of Man. There is no difference in God's Eſteem, between the outward Commiſſion of any Sin, and the propoſing, deſigning and contriving it in our Hearts. The external Commiſſion does indeed ſome Miſchief in the World, and ſo far violates that Peace and good Order which all Men are

are oblig'd according to their Power, in their proper Station, to preſerve. But tho ſo much Miſchief be prevented, when a projected Villany is not brought to Execution, no Thanks to the Projector, no Deduction from his Wickedneſs.

How inconſiderable muſt this Life appear to one that thinks ſeriouſly on Eternity! How ſmall a Share has the Peace and Happineſs of this Life, in the Deſign of our Creation! And therefore how ſmall a Part of the Malignity of any Sin is External! But be it as great as it will, ſuch a Perſon is entitled to the Guilt of the whole. If a malicious Reſolution has determin'd Murder, but the Hand that ſhou'd give the Blow is unexpectedly intercepted, the Soul without doubt is defiled with Blood, though the Hands are not: The Guilt that follows the Contempt of God's Authority, and the unnatural Violence of the Soul in ſuch Malice and Cruelty, cannot be ſuppoſed at all the leſs for that Providential Diſappointment.

So far as the Soul is concern'd, the Guilt may be compleat before her Commands are executed by the Body. Thoſe Sins therefore that work inwardly, that corrode and deſtroy the Heart, without appearing ſo much as in the Face, they ruin our Nature, and make us odious to God. Though Pride do not break out into Contention, though

Malice

Malice do not ſhow itſelf in actual Revenge and Miſchief, though the Flames of impure Deſires burn in the Heart only; this Veil of Fleſh, impenetrable as it is to human Eyes, can't conceal them from God. When poſſibly our Intereſt has ſo far influenc'd our Conduct, that we paſs among Men for honeſt, pious, chaſte, humble Chriſtians, God ſees through all our Art and Caution, and abhors our Injuſtice, our Impiety, our Impurities, and our Pride. At that ſolemn Day, when the Secrets of Hearts ſhall be diſcovered, many a ſucceſsful Hypocrite may ſurprize us, expos'd in all his Wickedneſs, a Spectacle to God, to Angels and to Men; and ſhall himſelf be confounded at God's Omnipreſence and Omniſcience. And as the Reaſon of Contraries is exactly contrary, what has been ſaid concerning Internal Vice, is to be apply'd reſpectively to External Virtue. As the Malignity of the Heart may give Vice its full proportion without External Acts; ſo likewiſe, where the ſincere Goodneſs of the Heart is wanting, human Virtues are meer Shadows.: In the former Caſe, no Puniſhment is avoided; in the latter, no Rewards obtain'd.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Our Duty muſt be entire, 1. *With reſpect to Relapſes into a looſe Way of living.* 2. *With reſpect to its Impartiality: No one Vice can be conſiſtent with Salvation.*

COnſtancy in our Duty, a ſteady, an even, a conſiſtent Life, is abſolutely neceſſary; a regular and entire Courſe of Piety and Virtue, not interrupted by returning to vicious Indulgencies, nor ſpoil'd by a conſtant Mixture of ſome Favourite Vice.

Relapſes. As to Relapſes in Life, when Men give themſelves up to the Neglect of God and Religion for ſome Time, and then in a Fit of Zeal ſet themſelves to attone for it; a Character too common in the World; it is not poſſible to ſay how many of theſe may be effectually recover'd; how often Chriſtians may offend in ſuch a manner, and yet return and repent, and be forgiven. *Novatian* was certainly wrong; but ſuch Apoſtacies

poſtacles as theſe are certainly very dange-rous, and (at beſt) will prevent any conſi-derable Improvements, any great Advances in Religion. Nor can ſuch Perſons ever have a juſt Confidence towards God; they can never enjoy a well-eſtabliſh'd Peace in their Souls: Nor will they be able to at-tain that Perfection in Faith and Virtue, which probably they ſometimes wiſh, and ſeem for the preſent in good Earneſt to pur-ſue. What is obtain'd at one Time, will be loſt at another: What good Purpoſes they ſeem to ſettle in their ſerious Intervals, will be diſpers'd in their Intervals of Gaiety and Vice, of Ungodlineſs and Vanity.

Piety and Virtue, when the Mind is ear-neſtly engag'd in them, have a very ſtrong Influence; they make very great Improve-ments in it; they weaken the Prejudices of Senſe, and give it a pleaſing Proſpect of its true Happineſs, its real Perfection. But if theſe Prejudices are reſtor'd, if this Pro-ſpect be intercepted, the Soul ſoon forgets the good Thoughts it ſo lately enjoy'd, and ſinks into mean and unworthy Entertain-ments; Virtue and Piety are ſoon diſgrac'd, Vice and Senſuality quickly recover, and perhaps ſtrengthen their Intereſt.

'Tis hard to ſuppoſe, that any Chriſtian can, upon Principle, divide himſelf between God and Satan; that any can be delibe-rately contented with Returns of Devotion and

and Prophaneneſs, of Sobriety and Lewdneſs: But however this be, 'tis plain, too many are ſo unhappy, as to fall into this contradictory Courſe of Life: And 'tis too natural to ſuſpect ſuch Fits of Devotion; to ſuſpect that they proceed not from the Soul, but from the Body; not from the remaining Strength of Faith and Reaſon, recovering the Man out of the Dominion of the Devil, but from the accidental Diſpoſition of the Spirits; to ſuſpect that ſuch Devotion is Melancholy, ſuch Submiſſion to God but a ſudden Fright.

When Faith and Reaſon are the Foundation of our Duty and Devotions, they are not eaſily remov'd, but ſettle into uſeful Habits; whereas thoſe uncertain Fits of Zeal and Repentance, that proceed from the inconſtant Humours of the Body, paſs in the Life of Man as Ships in the Sea, they leave no Tracks behind them: As the Waters come together again, the Man returns to his former Inclinations, no Signs left of his Repentance.

Nay, how ſincere and ſpiritual ſoever they ſhould be ſuppos'd; their being inconſtant and ſhort-liv'd, will prevent their having ſuch Influence, either on God, or on the Soul it ſelf, as may be depended on for ſo great an End as our Happineſs in Heaven.

If

If we mix our Devotions and our Vices, if we allow our ſelves to be licentious at ſome particular Times, or diſpenſe with the Obligations of Religion for our Profit or Pleaſure; how well ſatisfied ſoever we may be with our ſelves, our Hope in God proceeds either from Ignorance or Preſumption. God's Nature is conſtantly the ſame, conſtantly uniform and perfect; they, therefore, who are not ſo far like him, as to be conſtant in their Inclinations to Piety and Virtue, can never be acceptable to him.

We can't always go the ſame Pace towards Heaven, but we may always keep in the ſame Path: We can't always keep up the ſame Fervency of Spirit, no more than we can be always on our Knees; but we may preſerve our ſelves from groſs Prophaneneſs or Impiety. When we can name the Time in which we have no Dependance on God, in which we are not oblig'd to him for our Being and all we enjoy in it; then we may ſpend it as we pleaſe.

Our Obligations to worſhip God, do not riſe only from his Dominion over us, but from our own Nature likewiſe: Our Solemn Devotions improve our Spirits, and ſettle in them heavenly Affections, ſuch as protect and improve the Soul in every Part of this Life; and theſe Affections will cool, in the unavoidable Interruptions which the Infirmities of our Nature occaſion; which

keeps the moſt Religious from attaining any great Perfection. What then can be expected of thoſe, who add to all theſe Diſadvantages frequent Returns of Prophaneneſs, long Neglects of God? It is not conſiſtent with the preſent State of Human Nature, to be always at our Devotions, continually glorifying or contemplating God, continually cultivating and improving our Souls; but 'tis very poſſible to obſerve the Apoſtle's Rule, to *pray without ceaſing*; conſtantly to preſerve a due Reverence and Gratitude towards God, and to neglect no proper Opportunities of expreſſing them. We may make ſome Allowance for our Infirmities; but we ſhould likewiſe have a juſt Regard to our Capacities. We cannot, indeed, at preſent attain to the Perfections of Heaven; but why may we not avoid all the Impieties of Hell? We are confin'd to the Infirmities of ſenſual and mortal Bodies; but are we not bleſs'd with the Capacities of rational and immortal Spirits? We are allow'd, nay, we are enjoin'd, to ſpend Part of our Time in the Buſineſs of this World, according to the State in which Providence has plac'd us: But are we not all bound, both in Intereſt and Duty, to make what Proviſion we can for the other? We are not oblig'd to be always in the Temple; but we cannot help being always in God's Preſence, or dying daily. The moſt

moſt ſecular Part of our Time, therefore, ſhould be innocently employ'd, and (as much as may be) apply'd to the ſpiritual End of Life. In the Improvement of this, we are partly guided and determin'd by God, by the publick Ordinances of Religion; and partly left to our own Prudence and Piety, our own Judgment and Conſcience, our own private Reflections and Devotions.

Upon the whole, an impartial Piety and Righteouſneſs is indiſpenſible: One Hour ſinfully ſpent, will leave greater Impreſſions on the Mind, than many ſpent religiouſly. Human Virtue, like Man himſelf in this mortal State, requires Time, and Care, and conſtant Supplies of Nouriſhment, to bring it to its Maturity; but Matters that may ſeem ſmall, bring it to its End. Life muſt be preſerv'd by Induſtry, and the Concurrence of various Means; Death is always at hand, it waits on Negligence it ſelf.

One Habit of Vice ruins us.

In the next Place, it muſt be obſerv'd, as a Matter of the laſt Importance, that any one vicious Habit muſt utterly ruin all. It does not only prevent the good Influence of our Devotions, by mixing with them like Poiſon with our Food; but, like that too, it deſtroys us by its own Malignity. This is a Principle too often neglect-

ed: Too many Judaize ſo far, as to depend on ſome one Part of their Duty. St. *James* plainly delivers and ſupports it, in his Second Chapter: He delivers it with an Alluſion to the Law. As a Man ſuffer'd Death who had committed any one Capital Crime, as ſurely as if he had committed all that were ſo; a Chriſtian likewiſe, who wilfully offends in one Point, (*i. e.* habitually, which Point there is Charity) is guilty of all. This he ſupports with this Argument; *For he that ſaid do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo do not kill.*

James 2. 10, 11.

How ſevere ſoever this Principle may ſeem, 'twill appear to ſtand upon the ſame Foundation with all the other Laws of Religion. For Religion is to be conſider'd, in all its Parts, as neceſſary on theſe Two Accounts:

Firſt, As it is enjoin'd by God's Authority.

Secondly, As having ſome uſeful Influence on our Minds.

As it is enjoin'd by the Authority of God, every Part of it demands our moſt ſerious Regard: And if we chuſe what Command we will obſerve, and what we will deſpiſe, we follow not God's Authority, but our own Humour; becauſe all are confirm'd by that Authority alike. And as it has

as ſuch an Influence on our Minds, as is roper to prepare us for the Life of Hea-en; we are oblig'd, as we value that Life, be uniform in our Practice, becauſe of e Unity of God's Nature, the Harmony his Attributes. Such a Legiſlator natu-lly requires Sincerity in our Duty, which nnot be without Uniformity: It is not onſiſtent with one wilful Vice. God's Au-hority is an Influence on the Lives of Men epending on the Nature of his Laws, and n the Conſequences of Obedience and iſobedience. The Foundation, therefore, this Influence, as it affects the Minds of len, is the Opinion they have of his Wiſ-om and Goodneſs with reſpect to the Na-re of his Laws, and the Opinion they ave of his Power with reſpect to the Con-equence of their Behaviour. When this O-inion is deſtroy'd, tho' God will have the me Authority, as it ſignifies a Right of ommanding and puniſhing; yet, as it ſig-ifies a real Influence on his Subjects, he an have none.

Its Influence on God's Authority.

This Influence muſt proceed from one f theſe Three Propoſitions: Either, Firſt, hat God is ſo good, he would command othing cruel or unreaſonable, nothing but hat he thought advantageous to them. Or, Secondly, That he is ſo wiſe, they may afely depend on his Directions, and can't eaſonably prefer their own Counſels to his.

Or, Thirdly, That he is ſo powerful, 'tis the ſafeſt and beſt way to obſerve his Laws, whatever they think of them.

But whoever perſiſts in any one Vice, whoever avowedly and obſtinately offends againſt any one Law, directly deſtroys all theſe Suppoſitions, and conſequently God's Authority: He does in Effect declare againſt God's Wiſdom and Goodneſs in that Particular, and (as to that) out-braves his Power. And whoever is guilty of this in any one Particular, is guilty of it (by an immediate Conſequence) in all: Becauſe, if God's Wiſdom or Goodneſs be ſuppos'd to fail in any one Law, he can't be infallibly wiſe; he can't be unexceptionably good. All his other Laws become diſputable; they may all be as defective as that. If they are concluded not ſo, 'tis becauſe of ſome other Recommendation they appear to have, and not barely on his Authority. And again, if his Power be not ſufficient to ſupport his Authority in one Point, it muſt be too weak to ſupport it in any. If one Man may defy it in Oppoſition to one Law, others may defy it in Oppoſition to the reſt.

While God is ſuppos'd Infallible, All-righteous, and Almighty, the only Queſtion upon any Caſe is, Whether it be his Will, or not? The Debate, as to its Conſequence, is, Whether he has denounc'd ſuch Terrors, or

or not? But whenever 'tis ſuppos'd, that his Goodneſs, and Wiſdom and Power fall ſhort, every Man then will be judging for himſelf from the Nature of Things, as they at preſent appear to him; that is, every Man will do what's right in his own Eyes; and when 'tis come to this, the Authority of God entirely diſappears. All the Laws of Religion have the ſame Authority to ſupport them; and that Authority is entire in every one, and ſupported in all by the ſame Perfections: And therefore, as he that denies any one Attribute of God's, will, by as plain a Conſequence, deny his Being; ſo he that obſtinately refuſes Obedience to any one of his Laws, does, by as plain a Conſequence, renounce his Authority. This is one Branch of the Malignity of Wickedneſs, and the Reaſon of its Puniſhments; which conſiders God as inſiſting on our Obedience in this World; and of this any one vicious Habit is evidently guilty.

Its Influence on the Soul.

The other Branch of the Malignity of Wickedneſs, is to be conſider'd as the natural Reaſon of its future Miſeries; which is the Influence it has upon the Mind; deſtroying all Reverence for God, whoſe Authority it has ſet at nought, and raiſing a Contempt of Virtue, all that's good, or capable of laſting Happineſs. Moſt of the Duties of this mortal Life, as to their Matter, are determin'd by its preſent Circum-

ſtances, and uſually ariſe from its Infirmities and Imperfections; but if they are throughly examin'd, if they are trac'd up to their Principles, if they are follow'd thro' all their Windings and Turnings to their Fountain Head, they will be found to paſs thro' ſome general Principles in the Soul of Man, and to ariſe out of the Nature of God: And therefore, the wilful Neglect of any one Duty, muſt deſtroy ſome fundamental Virtue, and introduce an Enmity to God; that is, ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind, as will prevent our taking any Satisfaction in him. And as Angels, and the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, will have nothing in their Nature or Conduct but what is agreeable to God, it muſt indiſpoſe ſuch a Mind for their Society too, and will conſequently make it unfit for Heaven.

Seeing God.

The Happineſs of Heaven is deſcrib'd in Scripture by *ſeeing God:* But God being a Pure Spirit, we are not to ſuppoſe the Sight of him to anſwer to Carnal Viſion. It muſt be Intellectual and Spiritual: it muſt conſiſt in the Knowledge and Contemplation of his Perfections, and the Influences of them; which ſeems to anſwer beſt to perpetual Inſpirations, and a faithful Uſe of them.

This Sight of God may be concluded to anſwer theſe Two Ends: 1. An immediate Happi-

Happineſs, in ſuch a truly Noble and Rational Entertainment. 2. A ſtrong Impulſe to imitate his Perfections, and thereby increaſe our Happineſs.

St. *Peter* celebrates the Value of the Chriſtian Revelations in this manner; *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promiſes, that by theſe you might be partakers of the divine Nature, having eſcaped the corruption that is in the world thro' luſt.* If by partaking of this divine Nature, we underſtand our forming our Minds at preſent by its Perfections; this implies, that ſuch Conformity of our Minds to God's Nature, is neceſſary to our future Happineſs: And his adding immediately, our eſcaping the Corruption of the World, ſhows, that eſcaping that Corruption, is neceſſary to ſuch Conformity. And if by partaking of this Divine Nature, we underſtand ſuch Communications from it, as will hereafter make us happy in Heaven, a ſuitable Education, eſcaping the Corruption of the World, is declar'd neceſſary to qualify us for them. The Glories of this Divine Nature cannot aſſociate with the Corruptions of Earthly, Carnal Minds. 2 Pet. 1. 4.

Nor can we imagine that ſuch Minds would make any good Uſe of them, if they ſhould: Such Minds would either neglect ſuch Objects, and chuſe to think of ſomething elſe, or would rather be uneaſy than

than happy in the Sight of them. Such Things being ſpiritually diſcern'd, it muſt be poſſible for a Mind that's rational and free to employ its Thoughts otherwiſe; and being diſagreeable to the Inclinations and Habits of a vicious Soul, it can take no Pleaſure in them; nor can it receive ſuch Influence from them, as to engage its Imitation: We muſt be affected with a ſincere Eſteem of ſuch Accompliſhments as are ſet before us, or at leaſt have nothing in our Temper inconſiſtent with them, or elſe we ſhall not endeavour to improve our ſelves by them. For this Reaſon our Saviour promiſes the Bleſſedneſs of ſeeing God, only to the pure in Heart; they who have always preſerved in their Souls a faithful Reverence for God, and an impartial Love of Virtue.

But it may be asked, Though a general Wickedneſs ſhould be allowed to have thoſe Effects, yet why muſt one wicked Habit be ſuppoſed to have the ſame?

What has been already ſaid concerning God's Authority, may be entirely apply'd to the Influence of a vicious Habit on the Soul, both with reſpect to God and Virtue, and is ſufficient to determine it: It plainly deſtroys that ſolemn Opinion of God's Perfections which ought to command our Hearts, from which all our Reverence ariſes, and with which it muſt fall, in our

ſelves as well as others. As to Virtue, if it were poſſible to ſeparate the Love of it from all Reverence for God, which it certainly is not; yet all Virtues have the ſame Original Recommendation; and he that can deſpiſe that in any one Virtue, can never value it in others. Accordingly, all Vices have the ſame Original Malignity, and he that can diſpenſe with it in any one, can have no Averſion to it in the reſt.

Philoſophers in general conſent to this.

From hence I preſume it was determined by the wiſeſt and beſt Philoſophers of old, that whoever was Maſter of any one Virtue, muſt be Maſter of all; *Inter omnes Philoſophos conſtat*, ſays *Tully*, *qui unam haberet omnes habere Virtutes.* This I rather chuſe to mention, becauſe it ſhows that this Doctrine is not a Severity peculiar to Chriſtianity, but the obvious Dictate of plain, ſerious Reaſoning. The Actions in which theſe Virtues and Vices, as they ſubſiſt in the Mind, are ſuppoſed exhibited or expreſſed in this Life, do not always go together; a Man that is eminent for ſome may neglect others, or have no Occaſion for them: But whoever obſerves any Practice for that Reaſon becauſe it is virtuous, is habitually diſpoſed in his Mind to any other Virtue; and he who obſtinately indulges any vicious Practice, is diſpoſed in his Mind for any other, whenever it is recommended by his carnal Reaſons. His

Soul

Soul therefore has loſt all Love of Virtue for its own Sake, or for God's, which alone can make it capable of bleſſing us with any laſting Happineſs.

The two ſummary Command-ments.

That I may leave this Matter as clear as I can, I will endeavour to repreſent it in another Light. All the Duties in which Men are engaged, terminate, or are ſummed up in the Love of God, and the Love of their Neighbour; *on theſe two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*; on theſe two therefore depends the Happineſs of the Soul in Heaven: Now, if this Love of God be deſtroy'd by one bold Habit of Vice, and if this Love of our Neighbour by one unſociable Habit, then one Habit may incapacitate the Soul for Heaven. St. *John* tells us, *The Love of God is to keep his Commandments*; and if ſo, a wilful, habitual Contempt of any one, muſt deſtroy it, as it does his Authority; and habitual Diſhoneſty, or Maliciouſneſs, or any unſociable Vice, muſt deſtroy our Love of our Neighbour. Again, If our Love of our Neighbour be deſtroy'd, we cannot continue any Love of God; he that ſaith, *he loves God and hateth his Brother, is a Lyar*, ſays St. *John*. And if our Love of God, which conſiſts in keeping his Commandments, or at leaſt includes it, be deſtroy'd, the Love of our Neighbour, which is ſo great a Part of thoſe Commandments, cannot

Mat. 22. 40.

1 John 5. 3.

1 John 4. 20.

cannot ſubſiſt without it: The Deſtruction therefore of either, muſt deſtroy the other. Pulling down either of theſe great Pillars of our Duty and our Happineſs, will pull down the other with it; and any one wilful habitual Violation of either muſt deſtroy it. This muſt be true with reſpect to God, unleſs we can deſpiſe his Authority, and continue our Reverence for him and his Commandments; and it muſt be true with reſpect to our Neighbour, unleſs Malice, or any other unſociable Vice, may be conſiſtent with a generous Affection for Mankind.

And if the Soul be indiſpoſed for Heaven, of what Moment can it be, whether it were thus indiſpoſed by one Vice, or by many? If the Man be murdered, of what Moment is it, whether he received his Death by one Wound or by more, in one Part of the Body or another?

If therefore, the wilful, obſtinate Continuance of any one Wickedneſs, in Defiance of ſome plain Law, and the Conviction of our own Conſcience, appears upon a juſt Examination, to have ſuch Conſequences as theſe; to diſgrace God's Nature, and ruin his Authority in this World, and to wear out of the Soul all Reverence for him, and all ſincere Eſteem for Virtue, on which depends the Happineſs of the other: All Men are highly concerned to be ſo faithful

ful to themſelves, as to be entire in their Duty; entire in their Inclinations and Endeavours; though they may not avoid all Surprizes and Lapſes in all Parts of Life. One plain, one preſumptuous Vice is utterly deſtructive; *David* juſtly calls it, *the great Offence*; it contains in it the Seeds and Principles of all Iniquity and Miſery. Should a Man act with an implicit Submiſſion to his Maker's Laws in all Parts of the World but one, and in that one give himſelf up to all Sorts of Licentiouſneſs, reſerving that as a privileg'd Place; Who would not ſee the Abſurdity of this? But how vain, how unnatural ſoever this appears, it is not more vain, not more unnatural, than reſerving ſome one Part of the Soul, as out of the Juriſdiction of Heaven. If with *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, we fraudulently keep back ſomething, though we think we offer a great deal, we ſhall certainly be condemned with them as Lyars unto God.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Several Evaſions by which Men decline their Duty, and depend on preventing the Conſequences of a wicked Life. God's Mercy particularly on Repentance.

HAppineſs is ſo naturally deſir'd by the Soul of Man, and all who have any Notion of a future State, are ſo ſenſible of the vaſt Diſproportion between that and this, that the worſt of Men, unleſs they can contrive to live in uninterrupted Stupidity or Amuſement, muſt be ſuppoſed to account to themſelves ſome Way or other for their Conduct. 'Tis ſcarce poſſible to acquieſce in ſaying, Let God puniſh us hereafter as he pleaſes, his Will be done, and ſo ſhall ours. This is the Caſe of Devils, and ſuch deſperate Circumſtances only ſeem capable of ſupporting it. But Men are too willing to be deluded. Were it as eaſy to ſecure Salvation as moſt Men ſeem willing to imagine; were the Chriſtian Inheritance

heritance entail'd on us beyond all Danger of Diſappointments, 'tis more than probable Heaven had not interpoſed in ſuch an extraordinary Manner as we know it has. But though there is nothing of ſo great Moment to us as Religion, and conſequently nothing that ſo well deſerves our Care; yet there is hardly any thing which concerns Men univerſally, in which they are ſo contentedly ignorant or miſtaken.

Our Saviour's Caveat.

Our Saviour in the 7th Chapter of St. *Matthew*, at the Concluſion of his Sermon on the Mount, plainly reproaches thoſe who heard his Sayings and did them not, with a vain and childiſh Dependance; he compares them to a fooliſh Man, that built his Houſe upon the Sand, expecting Protection from the Injuries of the Weather, but for want of a competent Foundation buried in its Ruins. Many that heard Chriſt as his conſtant Followers, were guilty of this Folly; and happy had it been for the World, had it died with them. If when the true Character of Chriſt was eſtabliſh'd, when he appear'd not only a Prophet but the Meſſiah, not only in general the Meſſiah, but in all the Particulars of that glorious Character; when all the Doctrines he had preach'd in Parables and prophetick Reſervedneſs, were plainly declared: If then all had been as careful to conform to the Spirit of Chriſtianity, as they were to conform to the

the Letter; as forward to diſcharge its moſt weighty Duties, as to obſerve its External Rites, and lay claim to its Promiſes.

Evaſions. But a ſincere Practice of Devotion towards God, and all other Duties to our Neighbours and our ſelves, is too tedious, too unpleaſant, and yet the Proſpect of Damnation is too terrible to be endured; few can be tolerably eaſy under it; they are therefore very willing to embrace any Principles that promiſe them Eaſe in their grievous Caſe. Conſidering the Influence of vicious Habits, diſcouraging all Inclinations to an effectual Reformation, and the Majeſty of the Terrors of the Lord aſtoniſhing the Soul when it thinks upon Damnation; it is no great wonder wicked Men have projected Expedients, no wonder they have ſearch'd both Worlds for ſome Remedy, ſome middle way between the rigorous Extremes of a Religious Converſation, and Eternal Miſery.

Profeſſion. From hence it proceeds, that ſome perſuade themſelves their being baptiz'd into the Chriſtian Faith is Security enough; they find it eaſy to believe its Articles, or at leaſt to be perſuaded they believe them, without troubling themſelves with their Conſequences, or ſo much as their true Meaning.

Some one Duty. Others on the ſame Foundation can ſatisfy themſelves with the Practice of ſome particular Virtue, as they call it, but in truth

with the external and material Part of ſome Virtue only, without entering into the Spirit and Principle, which alone makes it truly Virtuous, and wou'd carry them through all their Duty. They are willing to enquire with the *Jews*, which is the firſt and great Commandment, propoſing to excuſe themſelves from the reſt, by an external Obedience to that; and are perhaps induſtrious in external Charity for no other Reaſon, but becauſe they ſuppoſe it covers a Multitude of Sins, in the Senſe for which they have ſo much Occaſion.

Publick Worſhip. Others abſolve themſelves from the Neglect of other Duties, by punctually frequenting God's Publick Worſhip, as if they thought he wou'd not inſiſt on their Obedience at any other time, but that which he had himſelf particularly hallowed, or had no Title to their Duty in any Place but his own Houſe.

Example. Others concern themſelves with none of theſe Thoughts, but obſerving the Neglect of the Duties of Religion to be a very general Infection, they are contented with being as good as the generality of Mankind; and comfort themſelves by concluding they ſhall come off as well, and think no farther.

Reſolving to repent. And ſome ſatisfy themſelves with a looſe Reſolution of what they call Repentance; to be undertaken ſome time or other, and will

will not ſee but that an Hour may be ſufficient to make Proviſion for Eternity.

But ſuch is the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, ſuch the Inſinuation, ſuch the Addreſs of its great Patron, that this World cannot ſet Bounds to the Imagination of Sinners; it is carried beyond the Grave, even to the Judgment Seat of Chriſt. There are two Principles ſuppoſed to take Place in the other World, and reverſe the Miſchiefs of Wickedneſs in this: The one, The *Roman* Purgatory; the other, Some ſecret Will of God's.

Purgatory.

A middle State between Heaven and Earth, to ſupply the Room of Piety and Virtue in this Life, is a Fiction that might become Heathen Poets tolerably well, and indeed ſeems an Improvement upon them: But as it is made a ſolemn Article of the Chriſtian Faith, no Man that don't depend on it, can think of it without Horror. The Proſpect of Hell at the End of a wicked Life, wou'd frequently fright and diſturb the Sinner of whatever Rank or Condition; but this prevents that Inconvenience. Upon this Principle Men may indulge themſelves in their Sins, they may live and die in Peace, and after all depend upon having that Happineſs procured for them by the Prayers of others, which they never thought worth their own.

Secret Will of God.

Others who are not miſ-led by ſo much Authority and Subtilty, can flatter themſelves into the ſame Careleſsneſs. The Scriptures are too plain in denouncing God's Vengeance on the Wicked, to bear any other ſatisfactory Interpretation; but ſo bold ſome can make with the Almighty, rather than ſubmit to his Laws, as to ſuppoſe all ſuch Denunciations made only to keep the World in Awe: They can depend on ſome reſerv'd Meaſures, to prevent that Deſtruction which ſuch Vengeance muſt make among his Creatures; they can be contented to diſtinguiſh God's Will into ſecret and reveal'd; they can depend on they know not what, but ſome Expedient or other, to prevent the Executions of ſuch a dreadful Sentence; not conſidering that 'tis their own Buſineſs to prevent it.

To ſuppoſe in general, that God will not be ſo ſevere as his Threats; that he carries his Terrors to ſuch Extremities, only to keep his Authority from Contempt, and to preſerve ſome Order in the World; this is juſt as reaſonable as to ſuppoſe, the whole of Religion the Invention of Men, for the ſame Purpoſe. The Goodneſs of God, like the reſt of his Attributes, is without queſtion Infinite, and his Mercy is over all his Works; but that Goodneſs is directed by his Juſtice, his Truth, and his Wiſdom; that Mercy is exercis'd and determin'd, not by fluctuating

ting uncertain Affections, but by the Eternal unalterable Rules of Reaſon.

General Cauſes of this.

In a Matter of ſuch Importance as Religion, it might be ſuppoſed, that if we are miſ-led, it muſt be by ſome very powerful Means; but if we dare look into our Hearts, we ſhall find it quite otherwiſe: The Cauſes of a Chriſtian's depending on any thing but an unreſerv'd Obedience, will be found ſhamefully abſurd. The moſt general Cauſe is Preſumption; a confus'd Aſſurance in our own Meaſures, uninterrupted by any Apprehenſions. Preſumption always appears to an Advantage; it always appears attended with Eaſe and Satisfaction; 'tis the only effectual Blind in the midſt of our Sins and Dangers. But to go through the World without conſidering to what Place it leads us; to live in the midſt of Chriſtians, and be inſenſible of Chriſtianity; to wander from one ſilly Humour to another; to be no otherwiſe mov'd by all the Powers of the World to come, than juſt to lift up our Eyes to Heaven upon ſome extraordinary Occaſion, and then let them fall again to their old dozing Indifference; this is a very unhappy and unmanly Temper. This Part of the Character of Preſumption is not always invincible, at leaſt, not always ſecured againſt Surprizes; but then it is too common for it to be ſuſtained by a hardy, bold Spirit, ſuch as can think upon the moſt

Preſumption.

dreadful Dangers without ſhrinking; ſuch as can face all the Terrors of the Lord, without making the leaſt Signs of Submiſſion. This is the moſt unnatural Temper that any rational Creature ſeems capable of degenerating to. The Devils themſelves are ſaid to tremble, but too many Men make ſhift to be above it. A natural Firmneſs of Mind in the Preſence of Danger, a rational and virtuous Courage, is a very laudable and very happy Quality; it keeps Men from being diſcompos'd and unfit for what is at that time their Duty; it keeps them from being frighted from ſuch Undertakings, as might be of great Uſe: But when no Good is propos'd, where nothing but Deſtruction can enſue, where the Danger is both uſeleſs and irreſiſtible, in ſuch Caſes to confront it, is not Courage but Stupidity. But as it is uſual for timorous Perſons to be eaſy and well ſatisfied in a numerous Company, tho' the ſame Circumſtances would terrify and confound them alone; ſo many that are not Maſters of this undaunted Spirit, can however continue in their Wickedneſs with a ſeeming Conſtancy, becauſe they ſuppoſe the generality of Mankind are with them. In common Dangers it is reaſonable and natural to be thus encourag'd; we may preſume upon the Wiſdom of many Heads, that there is no great Danger; or on the Strength of many Hands, that it will be eaſily overcome. But when we are in Arms againſt

against Heaven, when we are fighting againſt our Maker; as no Numbers can protect us, ſo no Arguments, no Authorities are of any Force againſt his Declarations.

Another Cauſe of this agreeable Deluſion, this Aſſurance of God's Favour without any good Grounds, is diſguiſing the Nature of Religion.

Diſguiſing the Nature of Religion.

To form the Chriſtian Covenant into an eaſy Scheme of Privileges and Gratitude, of Favours granted by Heaven, and ſolemn Acknowledgments to be made for them, this is too agreeable to the weakneſs of Fleſh and Blood. Our Publick Devotions, as they expreſs our Thanks for Mercies receiv'd, and prefer our Petitions for new ones; in this reſpect they are pleaſing enough. The Chriſtian Sacraments as they only put us in Mind of a Redeemer, and pay ſome Honour to his Memory, in this View they give no Uneaſineſs. But the inward Influences propos'd by theſe Things, and the practical Conſequences deſign'd by them, theſe are the Hardſhips, theſe are the heavy Burdens of Religion. But as it is expreſly declar'd Chriſt's Deſign, *to purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works*; ſo we ſerve a God, whoſe peculiar Character is the Searcher of Hearts; we muſt therefore recommend our ſelves by the Temper of our Souls. 'Tis unnatural to imagine we can conceal our Spirits under this Veil of Fleſh; that we can impoſe on God by our

moſt forward Profeſſions, or obtain his Favour by artful Submiſſions. To ſuppoſe it poſſible to anſwer the End of Chriſtianity, and ſecure our Intereſt in Chriſt, by mere Forms of Godlineſs, is a ſevere Reflection on him and his Inſtitutions. We ought certainly to fix on ſome Account of thoſe Inſtitutions, more rational in it ſelf, and more worthy of their Author: And we ſhall not find any that deſerves this Character, but the gradual Diſciplining our Nature, and bringing it, by ſincere Piety and Righteouſneſs, to its proper Perfection.

Faith and Devotion are Means.

Faith and Devotion are to be conſider'd as Means to a true Chriſtian Temper; to ſuch Improvements in Piety and Virtue as become our Obligations, and are agreeable to our Nature, and proper to prepare it for Heaven. Where they are not apply'd to this End, they loſe their Value; ſuch Faith is dead: Whatſoever Oſtentation of Devotion it may be attended with, 'tis no better than a Corpſe with gawdy Ornaments. Did the Buſineſs of Heaven conſiſt in outward Services, in a pompous Succeſſion of Ceremonies; then our practiſing ſuch in this Life, without intereſting our Hearts in them, might be ſuppos'd of ſome Uſe; it might be thought proper to bring us up to ſuch Services, and make us ready at an exact Performance. But alas, this is a very mean Repreſentation of that glorious Life,

Life, and a Diſgrace to our own Nature. The Happineſs of Heaven (tho' admitting ſome viſible Glories, and ſome expreſs Devotions) will however be chiefly rational and ſpiritual, and the meaneſt Part of it will require a pure and perfect Heart.

When our Faith has ſuch an Influence on our Minds, as to ſettle in us a fervent Piety; and this Piety gives Life to our Devotions; and our Devotions raiſe a ſincere Concern for all Parts of our Duty; and this Concern over-rules all vicious Inclinations, and engages the Soul in the Purſuit of all its proper Perfections; this is a Natural and Rational Progreſs thro' the Means which Religion directs to the great End which it propoſes: Then the Internal and the External Duties of Religion are mutual Aſſiſtances to each other.

A Man that's piouſly and virtuouſly diſpos'd, will perform all the outward Solemnities of Religion with more Devotion, and more Sincerity, for being ſo: And a Man that performs the outward Services of Religion with Devotion and Sincerity, will be improv'd by ſuch Performances in the inward Habits of Piety and Virtue; and will exert them the more on all proper Occaſions. The outward Offices of Religion, and its inward Duties, mutually influence and affect each other, like our Souls and Bodies. The outward Ordinances are as neceſſary

ceſſary in this imperfect State, as our Senſes and Food to our natural Life: And in Heaven it ſelf we ſhall not, in all Probability, be entirely without them; tho', as our Bodies ſhall be glorify'd, our outward Religion ſhall be refin'd. But to depend on the External Parts of Religion, and not be concern'd about the Temper of our Souls, this implies groſs Reflections both on God and our ſelves: It robs God of his moſt glorious Character, *the Searcher of Hearts*, and repreſents him ſatisfy'd with fawning Compliances. It diſgraces likewiſe our own Nature; it implies, that its Perfection conſiſts in very mean Accompliſhments, ſuch as might be ſufficiently attain'd by Creatures of very ordinary Capacities, with a very moderate Share of Reaſon, if not entirely without it. And as in common Life, to regard only the Subſiſtence of the Body, without conſidering to what End it is ſubſiſted; to ſink into Senſuality, and forget the more pure and rational Part of our Nature; as this is to level our ſelves with the Beaſts; ſo, to be concern'd in our Spiritual Life only for ſuch Things as may poſſibly be perform'd by the worſt of Men, and overlook the wiſe End for which they are requir'd, this entirely deſtroys all our Advantages as Chriſtians, and levels us with the Heathen that know not God. The

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Religion of the *Jews* conſiſted ſo much in Pomp and Ceremony, that it might ſeem ſome Temptation to this, and ſome Excuſe for it; but yet we find they are reproach'd for it with great Severity. *Iſaiah* is extreamly eloquent in ſuch Reproaches, and ought to make the Hearts of ſuch Chriſtians faint within them.

The Goodneſs of God.

The laſt General Principle upon which ſuch People proceed, is the Goodneſs of God: Which is certainly very great; and 'tis to this Goodneſs, that the moſt Pious and moſt Virtuous owe their Salvation. But it conſiſts in the Favour and Graciouſneſs of the Covenant of Redemption in general, and of the Goſpel Diſpenſation particularly; not in endleſs Grants of arbitrary and humourſome Pardons. Our groundleſs Suppoſitions may ſatisfy us at preſent, but they only keep us from providing againſt our Danger.

The Attributes of God, or the ſeveral Perfections of his Nature, are all exactly conſiſtent; they all act with the moſt perfect Harmony: Nothing is done by any one in Contradiction to another. His Omnipotence never ſports it ſelf in vain Miracles; 'tis always directed by his Wiſdom. His Wiſdom never degenerates into Craft; it never exerts it ſelf to impoſe, or do Injuries; it acts in a ſtrict Conformity to Truth

Truth and Juſtice. His Truth and Juſtice do not inſiſt on unneceſſary Punctilio's; they take no Advantages, no Delight in a rigorous Execution of the moſt indiſpenſible Laws; they act in Concert with his Goodneſs: And accordingly, his Goodneſs likewiſe conforms to his other Attributes; it never offers Violence to his Juſtice, his Truth, or his Wiſdom. We may bring down the Goodneſs of God from its Throne, and cloath it with human Infirmities; we may ſpoil it of all the Majeſty of its Wiſdom, its Truth and its Juſtice, and impoſe on it the Fondneſs, and Paſſion, and Self-Intereſt of mortal Parents; we may truſt in this Idol, and not be undeceiv'd for ſome Time; but when we come to try it at the great Criſis of our Souls, we ſhall find no better Succeſs than the Prieſts of *Baal*: We may expreſs our ſelves with as much Paſſion and Violence as we pleaſe, but it muſt be in vain; for there is no ſuch God in Heaven. His Goodneſs propoſes to make us happy by Piety and Virtue, but not without them: It conſiſts in the Nature of the Chriſtian Covenant, not in diſpenſing with any Part of it. But becauſe this is of the laſt Importance, I will inſiſt more particularly on it, and ſhow the true Concluſion that we ought to make from it.

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The Pſalmiſt ſhows us this Concluſion, in thoſe judicious Words, *There is mercy with thee, therefore ſhalt thou be feared.* This Mercy, or Goodneſs of God's, is univerſal, applicable to all Mankind in their ſeveral Conditions: It may raiſe the dejected Sinner from the Bed of Sorrow, and ſatisfy the Doubts of ſincere Chriſtians, ſenſible of their Imperfections, and reflecting on them with a pious Concern. But the Uſe to be made of this comfortable Principle, is as univerſally applicable as the Comfort it ſelf. We are not to conclude, therefore we may be eaſy, baniſh all Apprehenſions of Danger, ſleep on and take our Reſt: We ſhould reſolve on a generous Improvement of this Mercy; we ſhould fear God the more, we ſhould endeavour to ingratiate our Souls with him, we ſhould apply our ſelves to his Service with all Sincerity and Diligence. Pſal. 130. 4.

The moſt diſſolute Prodigal may have ſome Hopes left, if his own Heart don't exclude them; if he returns immediately, he may depend on a kind Reception, on the Tenderneſs and Indulgence of the beſt of Fathers: And they who have made it the Buſineſs of their Lives to recommend themſelves to God, but are ſtill encompaſs'd with Infirmities, and in many Things fall ſhort of that Perfection which God propos'd; ſuch may reaſonaby be encourag'd, by

by this Mercy, to continue their Endeavours: They may depend on it, their Infirmities will not be imputed, their Faithfulneſs ſhall be cheriſh'd and rewarded, and his Mercy will at length bleſs them with that Perfection, which their own Induſtry could not obtain.

As we are now diſpos'd, could we have no other Notion of God but as an Almighty Power exercis'd in the World, according to the ſtrict Rules of Juſtice and Righteouſneſs; not ſoften'd by Compaſſion, by any affectionate Allowances for the Weakneſs, and Ignorance, and Surprizes of its Subjects; how terrible would the Thoughts of ſuch a Power be! What Apprehenſions muſt it give us! With what Heart could we undertake any Inſtance of our Duty? With what Spirit could we act any Part in Life? It would be in vain to worſhip God, or make any Application to him, if it were impoſſible to prevail with him to pardon our Imperfections: And yet 'tis as vain to worſhip him, if we ſuppoſe him all Goodneſs, inſiſting on no Degrees of Virtue, but ready to cancel his own moſt Solemn Covenants, whenever we apprehend any Danger from them.

God's Mercy: *1. As an Attribute.* The Mercy or Goodneſs of God, is to be conſider'd under two Reſpects; 1. As it is an Attribute of God, and ſo a Part of his Nature from all Eternity; and 2. As it ſignifies

nifies ſome particular Method of treating his Creatures, of relieving their Wants and Diſtreſſes, and aſſiſting them in proſecuting their proper Happineſs. In the firſt Senſe it ſignifies a natural Inclination to do good: Had not ſuch an Inclination been part of God's Nature, there had never been any thing but himſelf: Nothing could prevail with him to create the World, but that natural Goodneſs which inclined him to communicate his Perfections, to give ſo much of them to Creatures as their ſeveral Natures ſhould be capable of receiving, and make them proportionably happy in the Enjoyment of them. To ſuppoſe any other Reaſon for creating the World, would be to charge God fooliſhly; it would imply ſome Want, or ſome Imperfection: To do it only to ſhow his Wiſdom or his Power, would be a vain Oſtentation; to do it for any Intereſt or Pleaſure muſt imply a former Want of it; and both theſe are inconſiſtent with the Perfection of his Nature. And as all the Attributes of God act with the moſt perfect Harmony, it is very reaſonable to expect the Continuance of this Mercy over all his Works. After the moſt triumphant Exerciſe of Omnipotence in the regular Production of his Creatures, it ſeems inconſiſtent with his Wiſdom to neglect 'em; to let 'em fall into Confuſion and Miſery, for want of ſome Care from

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that Hand that made 'em; ſome Care both of their Temporal and Spiritual Concerns. The Scheme therefore of that Philoſopher who acknowledg'd a God, but deny'd his Providence; and the Scheme of thoſe modern *Epicures*, who profeſs Natural Religion, but deſpiſe that which is Reveal'd; theſe proceed much alike, and are equally Enemies to this Mercy, by which God's inclin'd to ſupport his Creation, to aſſiſt all the Parts of it that are not intractable, to favour the effectual Accompliſhment of that good End which it firſt propos'd. This is Mercy conſider'd as an Attribute, or an eſſential Part of God's Nature; that Goodneſs which at firſt inclin'd him to create the World, and has inclin'd him through the ſeveral Ages to ſupport, aſſiſt and favour it, as far as his Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs would permit.

2. As a Method of treating his Creatures.

Mercy in the ſecond Senſe, as it ſignifies the Manner of God's treating his Creatures, conſiſts in the Effects of the former, in the happy Influences of that gracious Inclination to communicate his Perfections. This Mercy has divided it ſelf between both Worlds. As Man was created for two very different States, it has made a ſuitable Proviſion for each: For his Happineſs in this, God has provided by his Secular Providence; for his Happineſs in the other, by his Spiritual. Were God a Being of ſevere and inflexible

flexible Juſtice, not moderated or tempered with Mercy, this World would either not be at all, or elſe be very different from what it is; either its Inhabitants muſt be very much reformed, or the World it ſelf would be full of Judgments, defac'd and confounded by an angry Providence: 'Tis the Mercy of Heaven that continues it what it is: That Mercy preſerves the preſent Order of the World, and wards off thoſe Blows by which it would otherwiſe be ſhatter'd. And the ſame Mercy preſerves the Life of each ſingle Man, keeps it from being frequently wounded by Providence. Were all the juſt Reſentments of Heaven expreſs'd in exemplary Vengeance, Men would fright each other with their Miſeries.

But as this Life is of ſmall Moment in Compariſon to Eternity, ſo this Mercy to which we are to impute our preſent Happineſs, is but an Introduction to that which has laboured our Happineſs in a future State, a State Inviſible and Eternal. God created Man in his own Image, communicated to him ſo much of his own Perfections, as he thought proper for ſuch a Nature, ſuch a Degree of Happineſs as he propoſed Man ſhould enjoy. When this Image was defaced by Sin, the Happineſs that depended on it, would in Courſe be deſtroy'd; but the ſame Mercy that inclined God to create ſuch a Nature, inclined him likewiſe

to reſtore it, and immediately enter'd into proper Meaſures for that Purpoſe. His Natural Righteouſneſs and Juſtice would not receive a corrupted Rebel World into Favour without ſome Tokens of Diſpleaſure, and yet his Mercy pleaded for his Creatures that they might not periſh without Remedy. Such a Method was therefore ſettled, as might convince Mankind of God's Abhorrence of their Sins, and at the ſame Time give them an Opportunity to eſcape his Vengeance, and be effectually reconciled. This was done in the Perſon of our great Redeemer. The Mercy herein granted, conſiſts in theſe Two General Heads: The firſt, Something abſolutely compleated by God himſelf, which was a general Reconciliation to Mankind, reſtoring them to their firſt Capacity of Happineſs. The Second was a compaſſionate Reception of Offenders upon a ſincere Submiſſion, and an actual Return to their Duty. As it was neceſſary for God to inſiſt on ſuch a Conduct in this World, as might qualify us for his Favour in Heaven, ſo he was pleaſed to provide, that all Failures even in that ſhould not irrecoverably ruin us. This is the Mercy of God ſo often ſpoke of in the New Teſtament; this is the preſent Method of God's treating his Creatures purchaſed by the Blood of Chriſt.

From this View of God's Mercy, we may be allowed to conclude a Preſervative againſt Deſpair: Any Man that is heartily convinc'd of his Wickedneſs, and in good earneſt diſpoſed to reform it, and appears to have Strength and Time left for the Recovery of his Soul, any ſuch Man ought not to deſpair of making his Peace with God; he may ſafely depend on Mercy; an entire Reconciliation in ſuch Caſes, was part of Chriſt's Purchaſe. But others, in the Extremes of Life, when they are capable of nothing but Wiſhes and Lamentations, ſuch have not the ſame Title: All Promiſes of Pardon in Scripture are made to an actual Reformation, not to a barren Sorrow for our Sins. But as Mercy is an Attribute of God's, that may let in ſome Light upon the Soul in thoſe melancholick Hours, and keep it from utterly deſpairing; we cannot know certainly how bad any ſingle Man's Caſe is. *Concluſions from it.*

But ſince God has laid down a plain Rule for the Exerciſe of his Mercy, it is evidently unreaſonable to depend on it without Regard to that Rule. The bare Poſſibility of Acceptance, though our Caſe don't appear to be within the Rule, ought to give ſome Life to our Devotions even in the Hour of Death; yet it is Madneſs to depend on any Exceptions in our Favour, and waſte our Lives in the Neglect of the proper, certain

Means of Grace. 'Tis God's reveal'd Mercy on which we are directed to depend; his eſſential Mercy is like his Omnipotence, Infinite in it ſelf, but not exercis'd on all Occaſions; and therefore it is not in general a ſafe Foundation for ſuch Hopes: When it is ſettled and expreſs'd in Particulars, it then becomes ſerviceable to us: God may for ought we know have Mercy in any Caſe; ſo he may if he pleaſes turn Stones into Bread: But we muſt depend on the ſettled Methods of his Providence; we muſt not expect to be fed, much leſs to be ſav'd by Miracles.

The true Concluſion therefore from God's Mercy is Gratitude and Reverence, not Pre-
Pſ. 130.4. ſumption. This is what the *Pſalmiſt* concludes from it, this is what he means by fearing God: This Fear conſiſts in a ſincere Concern, leſt we ſhould offend him; in a watchful Obſervation of our Lives, in a cautious, apprehenſive Temper. The Fear of God will not ſuffer us to live by Chance; it obliges us to diſtinguiſh the Nature of Things, and to avoid or reform with a ſuitable Concern what we know to be diſagreeable or provoking to him. There ſeem to be two Springs from which this Concern flows, the one more pure than the other, but both wholſome. The one is our Dependance on God, our being to be determin'd by him to Happineſs or Miſery: The other is a ratio-

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al Reverence for the Perfections of his Nature. It muſt be acknowledg'd more ommendable, it muſt be ſuppos'd more ac-eptable to God, when we ſtudiouſly diſen-gage our ſelves from all things that are evil, s being contrary to his Nature, and forbid y his Authority, and that out of a pro-ound Admiration of that Nature, and a ncere Reverence for that Authority; not or the ſake of the Power he has over us, r what we may ſuffer by provoking him, ut for the ſake of his venerable Perfections: his is the moſt Chriſtian and moſt perfect ear of God. From this Spring the *Pſal-niſt* derived his Fear, not from his Terrors ut from his Mercy; and that which pro-eeds from the other, muſt at length run nto this; our Love muſt be perfected, and aſt out Fear. But while Men are not in-genuous enough to be prevaild on by this, hey ſhould conſider there is another very trong Argument for this Fear, taken from God's Mercy as it is ſupported by his uſtice; and that is, That if they continue o provoke him after ſo much Mercy, he ſeveral Inſtances of God's Goodneſs will e ſo many Aggravations both of their Guilt and Miſery.

I ſhall mention but one thing more con-cerning the Fear of God, and that is, That we ſhould take care it don't degenerate into Superſtition; that will prevent the proper *Superſtition.*

Uſe of it, and have much the ſame Iſſue with preſumptuous Dependances. A rational Fear of God is concluded either from his Goodneſs, or elſe from his Purity; that is, either from our Obligations to him, or elſe from his own natural Perfections. Superſtition raiſes an eager Dread in the Mind, from a falſe Conceit of ſomething like Cruelty or Fierceneſs in God; a ſort of peeviſh, humourſome Difficulty of being pleas'd: This has put great Part of Mankind upon ſtrange unaccountable Projects in his Worſhip; they have judg'd of his Nature by the Infirmities and Corruptions of their own, and have made their Applications accordingly, even to the unnatural Barbarity of offering human Sacrifice. But the laſt thing it thinks on is, The Conformity of the Soul to God. It frights the Soul with Shadows and imaginary Dangers, but generally applies it ſelf to ſome trifling Means for its Deliverance. As it ſtarts at every Thing, and ſeems in every Breath of Air to apprehend a Storm, and ſuppoſes God provok'd where he is altogether unconcern'd; ſo it flatters it ſelf with performing meritorious Service, where it is indeed moſt vainly and moſt impertinently employ'd. But the true Fear of God gives no ſuch wrong Turn to the Thoughts, it flies from any thing that is contrary to his Nature, or expreſly forbid by his Authority, and engages us to promote his

his Honour, and to imitate his Perfections; and on this foot to do every thing that is really good, or a proper Means for that End. And this is the Uſe we are to make of God's Mercy; this is the Concluſion we ſhould draw from it, not a fond Dependance that it will break through every thing to deliver us.

What is true Repentance.

But it will probably be inſiſted on, that 'tis the ſettled Rule of God's Mercy to pardon upon Repentance, and it muſt be allow'd to be ſo: But this only brings us to the true State of this important Subject, the Point on which it turns, and that is, what the Scripture Repentance really is: At what time ſoever this is accompliſh'd, it will certainly be accepted. We are plainly told, that whenſoever a Sinner returns, he ſhall be receiv'd: But we ſhould be very careful to underſtand right, what it is to return to God. As forſaking God does not mean our not thinking of him for ſome time, but a vicious Converſation; ſo we have reaſon to conclude, returning to him is not a ſudden paſſionate Application, but a virtuous Life. And where we cannot ſuppoſe room for this, we ſhould conſider whether paſſionate Lamentations over the Dead, may not as probably revive them, as a ſudden Fit of Sorrew for a wicked Life can inſtantly recover

the Soul from the Influence of thoſe vicious Habits that have been contracted in it.

Habits reform'd. Repentance in Scripture will be found always to imply a real Alteration in the Soul, exactly of the ſame Latitude with the Subjects of it. Though it is too generally underſtood to mean no more than ſome formal Submiſſion to God, or at moſt only ſome uneaſineſs in the Mind, for having expos'd it ſelf to God's Wrath.

Repentance in the New Teſtament is generally apply'd to thoſe who were not yet converted to the Chriſtian Faith: This was preach'd both by *John* the Baptiſt, and by Chriſt, and was the firſt Thing inſiſted on by his Seventy Diſciples, and his Apoſtles afterwards. When this was preach'd to *Jews*, it imply'd their reforming their Minds in whatever they wanted Reformation; when 'twas preach'd to Heathens, it enjoyn'd them not only this Perſonal Reformation, but likewiſe to leave their Idolatry. Such is Repentance throughout the Four Goſpels, and the Hiſtory of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles: In the ſame Senſe it is ſometimes ſpoke of in the Epiſtles with regard to Apoſtates. This therefore is general or habitual Repentance; and thoſe among the *Jews*, who did not want a general or habitual Reformation, are ſaid by our Saviour in this Senſe, to need no Repentance: Of the ſame Perſons he ſpeaks in that other Place, where

where he ſays, *I came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance.*

Where Repentance is apply'd to Chriſtians in the New Teſtament, it has for its Subject ſome particular Crimes. The Inſtances that occur to me at preſent, are *Simon Magus*: The Irreverence the *Corinthians* were guilty of in their Conduct at the Lord's Supper; their Negligence in the Caſe of the inceſtuous Perſon; and the Caſe of ſome among them guilty of Uncleanneſs: In all theſe Caſes only particular Facts were concern'd. I cannot at preſent recollect a ſingle Text that comes up to the Caſe I am now ſpeaking of, the Caſe of Perſons educated Chriſtians; not pretending to doubt the Truth of Chriſtianity, but in Contempt of the Authority contained in it, leading Lives generally and habitually Vicious, but ſtruck at laſt with terrible Apprehenſions, and in great Concern to avoid the Conſequences of their Wickedneſs: This is a Caſe I think never ſuppos'd. I do not conclude from hence, that therefore Repentance ſhall not be accepted from ſuch Chriſtians; I have before ſaid it ſhall certainly be accepted in all Caſes: But this certainly is founded only on a Conſequence from ſuch Caſes as are ſettled; and though this certainly be ſufficient on which to place the general Principle, that real Repentance ſhall be accepted at all times and in all Perſons, beyond doubt; yet this

Acts 8. 1 Cor. 7. 10, 11, 30. 2 Cor. 12. 21.

this Obſervation ought to make Chriſtians cautious; before they depend on ſuch a Conſequence, they ſhou'd be very clear that their Caſe is the ſame with thoſe in which 'tis declar'd accepted, at leaſt with reſpect to the general Reaſon of that Acceptance: This it cannot be allow'd to be, without an actual Reformation, without forſaking their Vices, and proceeding in their contrary Virtues.

Death-bed Repentance.

Again, It remains ſtill to be conſider'd by them, how probable ſuch a Reformation may be in the Extremities of Life: 'Tis certain, there is no ſuch Caſe appears in Scripture, no not among *Jews* or Heathens; ſo that they can have no Comfort in this Caſe, ſo much as by an Inference; and none but the Searcher of Hearts can determine for them. It is plain, that Sorrow at ſuch a Time is not it ſelf Repentance. St. *Paul*, in Circumſtances where there was room for it, obſerves, that it work'd Repentance, it put the Perſons concern'd upon reforming; but he does not allow it to be it ſelf Reformation. Such Men as have been habitually wicked, are abſolutely oblig'd to a real Change of Temper, an entire Correction of the Inclinations of their Souls, a new Set of Habits in the Mind. As a good Diſpoſition of Soul, an habitual Love of Virtue, and a rational Reverence for God, are the true Foundation of Eternal Happineſs;

neſs; it is Madneſs to expect it from our bare confeſſing and lamenting that we have wanted all theſe, if we ſtill want them. Shou'd any Man try ſuch an Experiment with his Prince, ſhou'd he make his Application with the moſt profound Humility, ſhou'd he declare with the moſt lively Eloquence, that he has conſtantly join'd in Treaſon and Rebellion, that he has had no Reſpect either for his Perſon or Authority, that he has look'd upon him as a Tyrant, and his Laws as publick Grievances, that he has not yet chang'd his Mind, nor finds any Inclination to change it; but obſerving that he has it in his Power to puniſh his Crimes with Death, and that he has valuable Favours at his Diſpoſal, he earneſtly deſires he may be pardon'd, and that thoſe Favours may be conferr'd on him.

The Application is plain enough; and the only Exception to it, is, that the Sinner ſeems ſo ſorrowful for his paſt Sins, that it may be ſuppos'd he would be dutiful for the Future. Such Sorrow when 'tis cloath'd with good Words may poſſibly impoſe upon himſelf; but Words are at beſt but imperfect Images in our Thoughts, and ſometimes do not in the leaſt repreſent them, and are utterly inſignificant with God: He looks directly into the Soul, and if the Sinners Heart be ſtill the ſame, there is not in God's Sight ſo much as the Purpoſe of a Change:

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The Truth ſuffers as much by being cloath'd in Words, as the Soul it ſelf does by being cloath'd in Fleſh. From hence proceeds the Satisfaction Men find in a paſſionate Sorrow, as if bewailing their Misfortunes, were repairing them: Being frightn'd by Sickneſs, or made melancholick by the Dregs of Iniquity, or touch'd by ſome lively Repreſentation of the ſad Conſequences of Sin, they humble themſelves before God, borrow ſome pious Expreſſions from Scripture, and perhaps make the Body pay an inſignificant Tribute of Tears to the Soul, and then ſpeak Peace to themſelves, as having perform'd the great Duty of Repentance; though they were ſo far from removing the vicious Habits of their Souls, that they did not ſo much as think of them: But having entertain'd their preſent Humour with ſome general, ſome confus'd Thoughts, they conclude all well. As if the many good Qualities that compoſe a Righteous Soul, could be recollected in an Inſtant, after they had been ruin'd and diſpers'd, like the ſeveral Parts of our Bodies at the general Reſurrection.

Occaſional Repentance.

There is another ſort of Repentance applicable to all Chriſtians, a frequent Reflection upon our Souls, and an humble Supplication before God for the ſeveral Offences we fall into, whether through Infirmity, or Surprize, or ſome more guilty

Cauſe. The Deſign of the former is to remove vicious Habits, and recover a due Reverence for God; the Deſign of this, is to prevent thoſe Habits, and preſerve that Reverence. But the preſent Subject ſuppoſes vicious Habits to have been contracted, and concerns not thoſe who need no habitual Repentance.

Death-bed Repentance.

Therefore, to return; Every Sin that we commit, every Habit of Vice that we contract, does not (for what is paſt) lay us under immoveable Wrath; the Covenant of Redemption provided a Remedy, a proper Means of Reconciliation: But in this Point, the Craft and Induſtry of the Devil have exerted themſelves with great Succeſs. Faith and Righteouſneſs are too plainly and too frequently inſiſted on, to be excus'd or interpreted away; but if ſomething that's eaſy, ſomething that's natural, ſomething that's accompliſh'd in a ſhort Time, even in the Arms of Death; if ſomething of this Kind will do inſtead of them, there can be no great Danger in neglecting them. And ſuch a Notion he has found means to propagate of Repentance.

But Repentance, in its true Senſe, (in which alone God will accept it) is ſo far from being ſubſtituted in the Room of Righteouſneſs, that 'tis indeed Righteouſneſs it ſelf. The only Difference between one that has always continued in God's Favour, and

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another that is reconcil'd to him, is this; the former has conſtantly (from his Youth up) practis'd Righteouſneſs, the other comes to the Practice of it later; but he has at length ſeen his Folly, renew'd his Spirit, reform'd the Habits and Diſpoſitions of his Mind, and become (what the other always was) ſincerely and habitually righteous.

When great Sinners become ſerious, when they are convinc'd of the baſe Ingratitude and Inſolence with which they have behav'd themſelves towards God, and of the dreadful Dangers to which they have expos'd their Souls; when theſe Reflections have heartily affected them, and put them upon reconciling themſelves to Heaven; the firſt Thing directed, both by Nature and Revelation, is an affectionate Concern for what is paſt, and an humble Submiſſion to their Maker: This is a proper Introduction of a real and ſubſtantial Repentance. But without theſe Diſpoſitions and Virtue, (which 'tis deſign'd to introduce) it is not Repentance, no more than Kneeling without Praying is Devotion: And we have great Reaſon to fear, that all which is call'd Repentance upon the Approach of Death, cannot have ſuch Succeſs. To expreſs great Horror when we ſee all that is dreadful before us, is a mere natural Motion;

on; and all the dying Reſolutions of Reformation that the moſt terrify'd Conſcience can make, may contain little or no Virtue. 'Tis no more an Argument of Goodneſs to reſolve to live religiouſly, when we are perſuaded we ſhall dye immediately, than it would be of Courage, to reſolve to dye bravely when we think our ſelves in no Danger.

And without ſuch virtuous Diſpoſitions, we have no Reaſon to depend on the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. The Happineſs of Heaven certainly is ſuch in its real Value, that it ought not to be expected by careleſs, indifferent, worthleſs Pretenders; and ſuch in its Nature, that it can't be enjoy'd by vicious Spirits. A Brute ſeems as capable of the Wiſdom of *Solomon*, as a Man habitually wicked of the Glories and Happineſs of Heaven.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The Parables of the Labourer in the Vineyard, and the Prodigal Son, conſider'd: Together with the Caſe of the Thief upon the Croſs.

HOW improbable ſoever ſuch Hopes appear from the Nature of Things, yet if they are ſupported by plain Facts or Repreſentations in Scripture, they may be depended on: And there are Two Parables and One Fact appeal'd to, for this Support. The Two Parables are, the Labourer in the Vineyard, and the Prodigal Son: The Fact is, the Thief upon the Croſs.

The Labourer in the Vineyard.

Before any Man concludes to take Advantage of the Labourer in the Vineyard, he ought to be well aſſur'd that he is entitled to it, at leaſt in his own favourable Senſe: And to make ſuch a Title, he muſt prove a Religious Converſation for the ſame Time

Time in Proportion to his Life, that this Labourer work'd in Proportion to the Day; but the moſt induſtrious Lamentations at his Death for the Vices of his Life, will do nothing towards ſuch a Proof. Again; Since his Reward is expreſly declar'd the Effect of the Favour and Good-will of the Donor, he muſt be as unexceptionably recommended as that Labourer was. And he had not refus'd to enter on his Work ſooner; he went in as ſoon as he was call'd: But who can pretend this, that has continued in his vicious Practices, till Sickneſs and a Death-bed make it impoſſible for him to continue in them any longer? How many Calls from God has ſuch a Perſon inſolently ſlighted!

But how plauſible an Argument ſoever he might form upon his own Interpretation, all his Hopes vaniſh when that Parable is rightly underſtood: 'Twill then appear to have no Regard to ſuch Caſes, but only to repreſent the Method God took in forming the Chriſtian Church. The *Jews* had long been God's People, and no Applications had been made to the Heathen World; but at length the *Gentiles* were invited and accepted, without Diſtinction: They enjoy'd the ſame Privileges, the ſame Advantages with the converted *Jews*. Tho' the *Jews* had long liv'd in Covenant with him, and the *Gentiles* had been alienated

from him till the laſt Age, the laſt Hour of the Day, yet he graciouſly rewards the Faith of both in the ſame manner.

Such is in truth this Parable; and ſuch a Parable was much wanted among the *Jews* at that Time: And the Point here inſiſted on, is what St. *Paul* labours in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*; but it has no Relation to a Death-bed Repentance.

The Prodigal Son. The Parable of the Two Sons is exactly the ſame, and therefore requires no other Anſwer.

The Thief on the Croſs, The Thief upon the Croſs may deſerve a more particular Examination; but it is ſuch a Foundation for all our Eternal Hopes, as one would imagine could not be depended on by any Man, that is not paſt all others. Two ſingle Sentences, not repeated by all the Evangeliſts, but mention'd only by St. *Luke*; the one a Petition, to which 'tis impoſſible to fix any certain Contents; the other an Anſwer, which don't appear to be a direct Return to the Contents of that Petition, whatever they were; but only to give the Petitioner this general Satisfaction, that he might depend on it, his Soul would be happy:

Upon this Suppoſition, that the Thief implores of Chriſt that he would interceed for him, and procure his Pardon, or that he would himſelf pardon him when he came into

into his Kingdom: This being taken for granted, both by ſuch Perſons as depend on this Example, and by many that have endeavour'd to perſuade them out of ſuch Dependance.

Conſider'd as an extraordinary Inſtance of Mercy.

One Account that has been given upon this Foot, from ſeveral Hands, is this: That 'tis an Extraordinary Inſtance of Mercy, not to be expected in all Ages, but owing to the Importance of that Time, when the Son of God was offering up himſelf, a Full, a Perfect, a Sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World. According to this Opinion, Chriſt gives a ſenſible Evidence of the Power of his Croſs; he makes a living Inſtance of the Efficacy of his Blood: As formerly, leſt they ſhould queſtion his Power to forgive Sins, he commanded the Sick of the Palſy to riſe and walk; he here pronounces Salvation to a dying Sinner.

But this could anſwer no End: The Friends of Chriſt, if they underſtood it as a free Pardon, could not be much affected with one ſingle Inſtance in the midſt of a whole Race; and his Enemies would be ſure to reproach it with Preſumption and Blaſphemy. And ſo far was it from being a peculiar Circumſtance of that Solemnity, that it was at that Time (of all others) moſt unſeaſonable. Chriſt was then dying, to make Satisfaction to God's Juſtice for the

Sins of Mankind; and, by making ſuch Satisfaction, to aſſure them, that God would not ſuffer Unrighteouſneſs to go unpuniſh'd. How inconſiſtent was it with this, to make a publick, concurrent Example of arbitrary Pardon, in a Perſon ſuppos'd to be notoriouſly wicked, and (without that arbitrary Pardon) utterly diſqualify'd for Happineſs!

Conſider'd as proceeding on his Faith.

Another Account that has been given, is, That the Thief having embraced the Faith of Chriſt, the firſt Opportunity he had to be acquainted with it; the Pardon granted by Chriſt is regular upon the Goſpel Covenant, for that promiſes the Pardon of all paſt Sins to Faith.

If Faith be underſtood in the full Goſpel Senſe, as including Repentance, (as I ſuppoſe it is by thoſe who uſe this Argument) I acknowledge this is an effectual Anſwer. As to the want of Baptiſm, (ſupply'd ſo ingeniouſly by ſuppoſing him baptiz'd in his Blood) had it not been for the Pleaſure this Expreſſion gave, it might ſurely have been ſpar'd; there can be no Occaſion for Excuſes in ſuch a Caſe, when Baptiſm was not inſtituted. But the Effect of this Anſwer from his Faith, proceeds upon ſuch Qualifications as they want, who would apply his Succeſs to themſelves. Were there no other Difference between them but this, that they have been convinc'd that Chriſt

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was the Meſſiah all their Lives, and that he had no Opportunity to be convinc'd of it till a ſhort Time before his Death; this would make a Difference in their Puniſhment, but it would not account for his Pardon.

This, as well as the former Account, ſuppoſes the Eternal State of Human Spirits too ſlightly determin'd, and leaves too much Room for ſuch Perſons to continue their Preſumption. But if Faith includes Repentance, a real Change of the Inclinations of the Soul, as I think it always does where that Change is wanted; if the Thief believ'd in this Senſe, there remains no Pretence for Death-bed Penitents to plead his Example: They are ſuppos'd at beſt only heartily ſorry that they are not like him. The general Declaration runs in theſe Words, *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* Here's no mention of Repentance; but theſe Words came out of that Mouth, that had ſaid before, *Repent, and believe the Goſpel.* St. *Peter* urges his Hearers to *repent, and be baptized.* *Jeſus* was to *give Repentance to Iſrael, and Forgiveneſs of Sins:* Where neither Faith nor Baptiſm is mention'd, but both ſuppos'd. Mark 1. 15. Acts 5. 31.

I hope it may be concluded unneceſſary to produce all the Texts concern'd in ſo

plain a Matter: It will eaſily be obſerv'd, that however Expreſſions may vary, Baptiſm is always ſuppos'd to be founded on Faith, and Faith on Repentance: A real Change of Heart is either expreſs'd, or imply'd.

The Subject of this Repentance was ſomething different, according to the Converts. The Epidemical Wickedneſs of the *Jews*, was their Enmity to Chriſt; and that of the Heathens, was their Idolatry; and each of theſe was immediately reform'd by Faith, as appears in the Caſe of *Saul*. But becauſe this would not fully anſwer the End of Chriſtianity, without reforming all perſonal Vices, therefore Repentance is to extend it ſelf, in both *Jews* and Heathens, to all their former Wickedneſs. Whether they have ſo repented or not, may not appear; but 'tis in Charity to be preſum'd: And if they have not, if they continue habitually vicious under ſuch Convictions, their Sins (I doubt) are aggravated, inſtead of being pardon'd. This was the Reaſon of the Baptiſt's Labours, and the Reaſon why Chriſt continued that neceſſary Work, preaching Repentance. Tho' the proper Subjects of Baptiſm did then receive the Pardon of all paſt Sins, and tho' the ſame Pardon may be depended on where Perſons are truly qualify'd for Baptiſm, but

can't

can't have it; yet this Pardon, granted upon Faith and Baptiſm, is no Ground for any Man to depend on it without Reformation.

It may be inſiſted on, That many believ'd on a ſudden, and in Conſequence of that Belief were baptiz'd, when there could be no Time for Repentance: But, as I have obſerv'd before, their Faith it ſelf (if ſincere) reform'd their Epidemical Wickedneſs; and as many of them as were not mere ſpeculative Believers, muſt be ſuppos'd of that Kind of Men whom our Saviour (before their Converſion) calls *righteous*, and ſpeaks of in another Place, as *needing no Repentance*: Such as were in their Moral Conduct habitually regular. Suppoſing any of them habitually vicious, and unreform'd, they cannot be allow'd any Pardon at their Baptiſm.

Matt. 9. 13. Luke 15. 7.

Let us reflect upon the Caſe of *Simon Magus*: He believes, and is baptiz'd, and continues with *Philip*, wondering at his Miracles; but ſoon after, St. *Peter* tells us, he is *in the Gall of Bitterneſs, and in the Bond of Iniquity*: Which Words deſcribe ſuch a State of Mind as can hardly be aggravated, ſuch a State as will not permit Charity it ſelf to ſuppoſe that Mind ſo lately qualify'd for God's general Pardon.

Acts 8. 13. — 23.

From the whole, therefore, I conclude, Faith without Repentance is no where pro-

mis'd Pardon: And as Faith is not mere Profeſſion, but a real Conviction, in its loweſt Senſe; ſo Repentance is not mere Sorrow for our Sins, but a real Reformation. And therefore, when the Thief is ſuppos'd pardon'd for his Faith, his Faith muſt include Repentance, *i. e.* a real Change of Soul; and in that Senſe, it will exclude all dying Penitents from making any uſe of this Example: If they can be ſuppos'd reform'd, they don't want it; and if not, they have no Title to it.

Their Caſe different. But to carry this one Step further: Could they ſuppoſe his Pardon to proceed from arbitrary Mercy, (which is by no means to be allow'd) yet what Reaſon have they to conclude themſelves equally recommended? Their Caſes are very different, ſo different, that they will not be judg'd by the ſame Rule.

When he ſuffer'd, Chriſtianity was not eſtabliſh'd; our Saviour had not explain'd his Spiritual Character; the Chriſtian Baptiſm was not inſtituted; the bleſſed Spirit, in its full Influence, was not diſpens'd; Life and Immortality, in all their Glories, were unknown to him: The *Jewiſh* Law was ſtill in Force; 'twas to him the Rule of Life, and therefore the Rule by which he ſhould be judg'd; 'twas by the Obligations and Advantages of that, he was to ſtand or fall. But the Obligations and Advantages

vantages of Chriſtianity, as it has been long eſtabliſh'd, make a wide Difference between vicious Chriſtians and ſuch a Criminal as this, how bad ſoever we ſuppoſe him. *Life and Immortality are brought to light through the Goſpel :* The Goodneſs of God in our Redemption, is now fully diſplay'd ; the Chriſtian Ordinances, and the Influence of the bleſſed Spirit, are very great Advantages ; the Covenant of Grace is fully propos'd, the Terms of it are Faith and Righteouſneſs. The only Reſerve is this ; If a Man become ſincerely and habitually righteous, he ſhall be accepted, tho' the former Part of his Life was vicious. This is repreſented under the general Name of Repentance ; but it inſiſts indiſpenſibly on Holineſs and Virtue ; it is not ſatisfy'd with Sorrow for the want of them, how paſſionate ſoever. To depend therefore on this Example, is, in this View, great Preſumption, a Preſumption upon the greateſt Uncertainties, in a Matter of the higheſt Moment. And yet even this is ſuppoſing more than we have certain Grounds for : For vicious Chriſtians to ſuppoſe him as wicked as themſelves, is merely precarious. Should we hear a Pardon pronounc'd from Heaven on a Fellow-Chriſtian and Fellow-Rebel, one that was ſubject to all the ſame Obligations, and had (to the beſt of our Obſervation) ſpent his Life in the ſame manner

'Tis precarious to ſuppoſe him as wicked as themſelves.

ner with our ſelves; even in this Caſe, it would be extreamly dangerous to depend on the ſame Pardon; becauſe many Things may recommend him to the Searcher of Hearts, which we can't ſee in him, and which we know to be wanting in our ſelves. How much more dangerous then is it, to make the ſame Concluſion from a *Few* and a Stranger; from one that liv'd under a different Diſpenſation, and of whoſe Wickedneſs we can be ſure but of one ſingle Inſtance! For tho' he ſpeaks of more Facts than one, this may be only becauſe he ſpeaks of the other Malefactor's Crime too.

No ſudden Pardon imply'd.

What may be urg'd from theſe Conſiderations, may be ſufficient to diſcountenance this Preſumption, tho' it ſhould be granted that our Saviour's Words contain a ſudden Pardon. But from whence ariſes the Neceſſity of granting this? Should it be allow'd, that the Thief (in his Petition) meant a Pardon of his Sins; which is more than can be prov'd; it will not follow, that Chriſt intended ſuch a Pardon. He may as juſtly be ſuppos'd to imply, that he did not want it; that his Faith and Repentance were accepted by God; which ſhould appear to him that Day, by his being plac'd with him in Paradiſe. Our Saviour knew what was in Man; he ſaw the Receſſes of the Soul, and may therefore fairly be underſtood (in

(in theſe Words) to declare to him the State of his, only to acquaint him with a Fact, that muſt be in the higheſt Degree comfortable to him.

To ſupport this, it may be obſerv'd, That as we know of but one ſingle Inſtance of his Wickedneſs, ſo many Things may be urg'd to reſcue that from the Severity of a righteous Judge: The ſame Fact committed in different Circumſtances, is not the ſame Crime: Its Malignity may be much leſſen'd, or much aggravated by the Condition of the Perſon. The Criminal, in this Caſe, acknowledges he ſuffer'd juſtly; but a Chriſtian, under the ſame Condemnation, would be far more guilty. One that could break thro' all the Arguments and Admonitions of the Goſpel, one that could trample under his Foot all Means of Grace, all Hopes of Glory; ſuch an one muſt be ſuppos'd to have corrupted his Heart to a very great Degree. But a poor Wretch, in the Twilight of Judaiſm, when all Communication with Heaven was cut off, when Prophecies were ceas'd, when the plaineſt Laws themſelves were quite bury'd in the Rubbiſh of Gloſſes and Traditions, and the Nation become univerſally degenerate; in ſuch Circumſtances as theſe, a Criminal that fell by the Hands of Publick Juſtice, by a Severity that was proper to preſerve the Peace and good Order of the

Only one Sin appears.

This leſſen'd by his Circumſtances.

the World; tho' poſſibly, in the reſt of his Life, no bad Example to his Judges themſelves; ſuch an one, compar'd to a Chriſtian generally vicious, appears with the Advantage of a Saint. In ſuch Circumſtances, it is not neceſſary to ſuppoſe any Preſumption: Nor could ſuch a ſingle Act of Sin ſo far vitiate the Soul, but that it might be poſſible to recover it in a ſhort Time; poſſible to ſettle it in ſuch a Temper, as might give him a good Title to Paradiſe, (the Preliminary of ſome future Happineſs) by a ſerious Application for leſs Time than he might, for ought we know, have to make ſuch an Application in.

It don't appear, but that he was truly reform'd.

And as the Malignity of his Crime was leſſen'd by his Circumſtances, and upon that Account the Influence it had upon his Soul more eaſily corrected; ſo it cannot be prov'd from any thing ſaid of him, that he was not Maſter of a virtuous State of Mind, that the Habits and Diſpoſitions of his Soul were not at that Time regular and righteous: It does not appear that he had any Thing to repent of but the Fact it ſelf, for which he ſuffer'd. As to all other Vices, we ought to be govern'd by that common Rule of natural Equity; every Man is to be ſuppos'd Innocent, till he is prov'd otherwiſe. As to the Fact it ſelf, we have no Account of its Circumſtances, and can therefore make no Judg-

Judgment of its Guilt; and whatever it was, we know not what might overrule his Judgment or Inclination, what Violence he might do to his own Temper, to ſatisfy ſome importunate Neceſſities, what Remonſtrances his Conſcience might make againſt it, and how ſoon it might recover its Authority. If this was his Caſe, as we know not but it might, a ſingle Crime though Capital, might not fix an incorrigible Habit; if he made a good Uſe of his remaining Time, this alone might not render him incapable of all Happineſs after Death. Should we ſee a Chriſtian executed for a like Crime, ſurpriz'd into it by ſome ſtrong Temptation, but in the reſt of his Life regular and virtuous, and at his Death giving exemplary Proofs of Patience and Reſignation, of Humility and Penitence, of a well-compos'd and pious Temper; in this Caſe, we cou'd not in Charity conclude his Condition deſperate; nor could any other Chriſtian, corrupted and degenerate by a long Courſe of Impiety and groſs Immorality, be flatter'd with the ſame Hopes of Mercy, when frighted into Agonies and Clamour by Death.

Laſtly, 'Tis probable from what is recorded of him, that he had indeed corrected his Soul, and attained to a very good State of Mind. Since the Infidelity of the *Jews* in general is imputed by our Saviour to the Vici- *It appears very probable he was.*

Viciouſneſs of their Temper, and the Hardneſs of their Hearts; we ought according to a common Rule in reaſoning, to impute the Faith of this Criminal to a well-diſpos'd Mind, to a ſerious, a regular, a devout Temper. Faith in all its Glory, after a full Confirmation of its Truth and Importance, depends very much on the Diſpoſition of thoſe to whom it is propos'd: A Man that's become obſtinate in Vice, is uſually blind to the cleareſt Demonſtrations of the Spirit. On the contrary, when human Probabilities are ſtrong againſt it, when it is thought a ridiculous Singularity, then to embrace it heartily, to reſign our ſelves to it, and depend on it for our Happineſs, this argues an uncommon Degree of Virtue. And this was the Caſe before us, ſuch was the Reſignation of this Criminal on the Croſs, thus did he declare for Chriſt; his Faith went as far as his Apoſtles themſelves appear at that time to have gone, and poſſibly farther; 'tis poſſible Chriſt might have declar'd himſelf to him as a dying Man, and though his Faith be not ſuppos'd the Cauſe of any ſudden Pardon, it may be ſuppos'd a ſtrong Proof of a well diſpos'd Mind. All the Wiſdom of the *Jewiſh* Nation had combin'd againſt him, and prevail'd with the *Roman* Magiſtrate to condemn him: One of his own Apoſtles betray'd him, another ſolemnly diſown'd him; and all, either through

Fear or Shame, forſook him. His Death was attended with the common Infirmities of Humanity, and with ſuch Mockings and Revilings too, as uſually prejudice and harden moſt ordinary Minds, and ſet them againſt thoſe that ſuffer them. The Faith therefore of this happy Penitent may juſtly be allow'd an uncommon Goodneſs and Regularity of Mind; it cannot be imputed to the Impreſſions of his preſent Condition; he ſubmitted to that, for ought appears, without any Confuſion, without any Diſorder: Nor can it be imputed to an irreſiſtible Evidence of Chriſt's Character; his Fellow-ſufferer in the ſame Circumſtances was ſo far from his Faith, that he probably dyed with Blaſphemies in his Mouth.

Nothing to Death-bed Sorrow.

From hence therefore we may conclude, he was indeed effectually reform'd, and not only ſorry for his Sins. From hence we may conclude, that the Comfort his Saviour gave him was no arbitrary Pardon, and that it cannot authorize the Preſumption of a Death-bed Repentance, or any Hopes of Heaven, without a uniform Righteouſneſs, a well eſtabliſh'd Piety and Virtue: 'Tis the moſt likely Paſſage in Scripture to flatter ſuch a Purpoſe; but Men muſt be very fond of ſuch Flattery, before they can truſt their Salvation to it. What Errors we fall into in the Conduct of our Lives, may poſſibly be corrected; but a Death-bed Repentance,

tance, if it be an Error, is an Error that is incorrigible: And that it is an Error, the Wiſdom of God in having concern'd himſelf ſo far in human Life, the Dignity of human Nature, and all Parts of the New Teſtament, this Example it ſelf not excepted, join in full and unanſwerable Evidence. Had People in ſuch Caſes nothing to do but to ſue for Pardon, were the real Diſpoſitions of their Minds of no Moment, that Pardon wou'd hardly be apply'd for with common Decency. When Nature is in ſo much Confuſion, when the Body commands ſo much of the Attention of the Mind, and provokes it to exert all its Affections, when it can hardly think of any thing diſtinctly but Pain, what Hopes can there be of reverſing the Wickedneſs of a whole Life, by the Devotions of ſuch a Death? But alas! Suing for Pardon in ſuch groſs Caſes, can at beſt only move the Compaſſion of Fellow-Creatures, weak as our ſelves. The Judge of all the Earth proceeds upon more rational, more conſiſtent, and more uſeful Principles; not ſo well fitted to humour and flatter Mankind, but much better to promote their real Good. And therefore whatever Formalities of Death we might be permitted to contrive, in how ſolemn a Manner ſoever we might take leave of this World, and beſpeak our Entertainment in the other; it is not what we ſay,

but

but what we are that muſt determine us. The Paſſions may ſoon be alarm'd at the Sight of extream Danger; and a few Hours may ſend up many Cries to Heaven, many very affectionate Lamentations: But if the ſettled Condition of the Soul remains the ſame, this is only dying in a Fright.

CHAP. IX.

The great Reaſon we have to conform faithfully to the Deſign of God's Spiritual Providence.

THE Wiſdom of conforming to God's Spiritual Providence may ſafely be referr'd to the moſt Carnal and Secular, to be try'd by their own Laws, their own Maxims of Prudence in Temporal Concerns; only laying down as a Fundamental the true Character of Man, the true State of human Nature; and this is no more than explaining the Subject of the Queſtion.

A very general View of Man may be ſufficient: We need only conſider him as the Creature of God, created Rational and Immortal, oblig'd to live by his Maker's Laws, *What is Man?*

by whatever Means they are made known to him; and in conſequence of that Obligation, depending on the Righteouſneſs of God for ſuitable Rewards and Puniſhments, according to his Obſervance or Neglect of thoſe Laws; Rewards and Puniſhments equal to ſuch a Nature, and the Majeſty of ſuch a God; and therefore of greater Importance than we are able to comprehend, and of a Continuance to which the moſt lively Imagination can fix no Bounds. The Queſtion to be conſider'd, is, Since Man is to continue for a ſhort time upon Earth, and then be diſpoſed of for Eternity, either in Happineſs or Miſery, according to his Conduct, What is the beſt Uſe ſuch a Creature can make of ſuch a Life? Whether to reſign to the Counſels of his Maker, and direct all Parts of his Conduct by his Will; or to conſult with the Appetites and Affections of Fleſh and Blood, and gratify them without any Scruple, any farther Conſideration? One of theſe he muſt ſtand to in the Iſſue; all Expedients to accommodate Matters with his Maker, and be wicked without being miſerable, are childiſh Vanities.

What's his beſt Uſe of Life?

Mens Thoughts are too apt to be fix'd to this World, they are apt to be fond even of its Miſeries; all Oppoſition to it ſeems unnatural, it appears a humourſome withſtanding their own Happineſs. But the plain Reaſon of this, is, That they do not conſider

ſider themſelves in their proper Characters; they overlook their true Happineſs; they are concern'd for themſelves only as meer Animals, and confine that Concern to their preſent Satisfactions, without weighing their Conſequences, ſo much as with regard to this Life.

God to be obey'd as Creator.

Had we no particular Notices of God's Deſigns or Diſpoſitions, in order to his ultimate End; yet the very Being of God himſelf might convince us, that a lawleſs and extravagant Life, in all Parts, in all Degrees of it, is what can't be juſtify'd. The moſt plain and obvious Notion of him is the Creator and Governor of the World; and this Conſideration of him muſt extort it from us, that it is reaſonable we ſhould obey him; that whatever we can know to be his Will, ought to be a Law to us, a Rule to live by, not to be wantonly neglected. Such a Being conſider'd only in his own Perfections, ſuch Perfections as the Creation muſt ſuggeſt to us, this muſt raiſe a very high Eſteem for him, a Being in whom and by whom all other Beings live, and move, and ſubſiſt. And if we conſider him as the Author of all our Capacities of Happineſs, and as an irreſiſtible Power on which we have an abſolute and conſtant Dependance; theſe Conſiderations ſhould move our Love, our Reverence, our Hopes, our Fears.

We cannot think ſo meanly of our ſelves, and of all the World about us, as to ſuppoſe that we were all created, and are all daily preſerved by him, without any Meaning, without any conſiderable Deſign: We cannot entertain ſuch reproachful Thoughts of his Wiſdom, as to queſtion his having ſettled all Things in a proper Diſpoſition; a Diſpoſition proper to anſwer the End of their Creation, whatever that End be: We cannot ſink into ſuch unnatural Notions of him, as to ſuſpect that End any thing but the Happineſs of his Creatures. To ſuſpect ſome other End inconſiſtent with this, would be conceiving him an arbitrary Tyrant, proſecuting his own Humour without doing good. No Opinions can be more unnatural than theſe; and if we allow them to be falſe, it muſt follow, that Men were created for ſome important End; that their Creator has diſpos'd all Parts of their Lives in ſuch a Manner as will beſt promote that End; that the End it ſelf is their Happineſs, and that he has apply'd his Authority to ſecure that Happineſs: And no Man that allows all this, can deny his Obligation both in Prudence and in Intereſt, as he values his own Preſervation, his true natural Happineſs, to live by his Maker's Will, *i. e.* to do nothing that is unlawful, nothing that is not proper for ſuch a Creature in ſuch Circumſtances to do. And he that is fix'd in this Principle, and conſtant

ſtant to it in his Practice, is a dutiful Subject of God's Spiritual Providence; whatever Temptations may be propos'd to him, he appeals to that, and depends on the Conſiſtency of it.

As a rational Creature, he gives the Soul Preference to the Body, and therefore confines all Appetites and all Affections to ſuch Rules as preſerve the Uſe and Peace of his Mind; he will not wound it with Guilt, nor will he ſtupify it with Senſuality.

As endued with a regular Conſtitution of Body, he is concern'd to preſerve that; fully aſſur'd, in Confidence of his Maker's Wiſdom, that it is beſt diſpos'd in its true, natural State; and therefore he will not expoſe it to the Flames of Luſt or Rage, or to the Confuſion of Intemperance.

As living among Men of like Paſſions and Infirmities, he knows that the Happineſs of Society depends upon the Practice of Juſtice and Charity, a regular Honeſty, and a ſincere Benevolence; and therefore he makes theſe Virtues the Rules of his Conduct; whatever preſent Advantages may tempt him to break through them, he looks on it as a Bribe that would ruin him.

As Governor of the World.

If ſuch a Perſon carries his Thoughts one ſtep farther, and conſiders God as Governor of ſuch a World, his Wiſdom will ſhow that he muſt be concern'd for the Succeſs of what he propos'd by the Creation; and his

Juſtice will make it appear reaſonable to conclude, that he will puniſh ſuch Practices as deſtroy it: Such Puniſhments may poſſibly be ſuppos'd executed in this World only: But a ſerious Obſervation of his uſual Diſpenſations with reſpect to ſingle Men, will afford ſtrong Reaſons to expect a more regular Execution of them in another. But whether they are ſuppos'd inflicted in the one or in the other, they muſt be competent Diſcouragements to all ſorts of Vice: The Wiſdom of their Author implies this; were they not ſo, they would not be proper for the End propos'd by them. Since that End is to reſtrain the Subjects of that Power that inflicts them from a wanton or froward Violation of his Laws; if they were properly form'd to anſwer that End, they muſt lay ſo great a Burthen on Diſobedience, as to make the accidental Satisfactions of it, a diſadvantageous Bargain; they muſt plainly ſhow the Sinner Repentance and Miſery through the thin Diſguiſe of Pleaſure, and make his Heart ſorrowful in the midſt of Laughter.

Revelations urge it.

So far a Man might and ſhould go by the Strength of Natural Reaſon. But when we conſider the Revelations with which God has bleſs'd the World, we muſt go a great deal farther: Natural Reaſon, not conducted by Revelation, and at the ſame time diſturb'd by confus'd Affections, and practis'd on by Devils,

Devils, is too eaſily miſ-led. Some Heathens there have been who have reſign'd to God's Spiritual Providence in a very eminent Manner; but ſuch Inſtances have appear'd as Prodigies, ſuch Perſons have been conſider'd by thoſe among whom they lived, rather as humourſome than virtuous.

From God's Nature and Preſence.

But the Revelation granted in purſuance of the Covenant of Redemption, makes ſuch Reſignation a plain Duty, and gives us the greateſt Encouragement to practiſe it. How amiable, how excellent a Character does it give us of God! How plain and important a Repreſentation does it give of Human Nature! What affectionate Applications does it make to us, to every thing in us that is capable of any good Impreſſions, from the Offices of Chriſt! With what Majeſty and Force does it perſuade, while it draws back the Veil, and lays the other World open to our View! Cou'd the poor deluded Wretch that proſtitutes himſelf to Vice, be prevailed with to conſider the Nature of God, and the Certainty of his obſerving him in all the moſt ſhameful Parts of his Behaviour, he'd properly fly like *Cain*, dejected and terrify'd. All Men muſt be contented to be far ſhort of the Perfections of God, how much ſoever they may admire them; but the Conſideration of thoſe Perfections may keep them from the Baſeneſs of ſubmitting to Senſualities, unworthy of a

rational Nature: They may make them ſenſible of the Abſurdity of forming their Lives by the Example of Brutes, rather than by that glorious Being whom they acknowledge moſt perfect and moſt happy. But could they be ſo meanly contented, yet were they but conſcious of God's Preſence, conſcious that this perfect Being was an Eye-witneſs of all their Actions, their Souls would faint within them, they'd decline their vicious Purpoſes, and implore Pardon for entertaining them. What Impreſſions might not be expected from the Preſence of ſuch a Being on thoſe that abſolutely depend on him, were they but ſenſible that he was preſent? What can be offer'd us from any Part of the World that can reaſonably prevail with us to incur his Diſpleaſure? Can the whole Force of it united, protect us againſt him? Can the moſt artful Retirements conceal us from him? Can the utmoſt Indulgence in all the Pleaſures of the World, make it a prudent Choice to embrace its Friendſhip, with a full Aſſurance that it is Enmity with him? No, certainly. It therefore requires nothing but a ſettled Senſe of this glorious Being on our Hearts, to overrule the moſt habitual Vices.

The Dignity of our own Nature.

But farther, If theſe Vices have not ſunk us too low, this Revelation, as it repreſents to us the Dignity and Importance of our Nature, having brought Life and Immorta-

lity to Light, will animate and ſupport us, and ſhow us the ſordid Ingratitude of dropping ſuch Bleſſings, of diſappointing the great and good End of our Creator. Had we nothing to be concern'd for but the Iſſue of our Conduct in this World, were God's ſecular Providence our higheſt Principle, had we no Notion of Happineſs or Miſery, but what our preſent Experience gives us, the Importunity of our Affections, and a ſanguine Preſumption that though God was concern'd for the regular and well being of his Creation, yet it might not fall to our Lot to be made Examples; theſe might compoſe our Minds, and we might continue to live counter to God's Scheme of Life. But Revelation gives us ſo different an Account of Mankind, that nothing but an eſtabliſh'd Neglect of it can protect us from the Horrors of a rebellious Conſcience, an ungrateful Mind that has deſerted the Goodneſs of its Maker, and joined in defiance of him with the worſt of his Creatures. The frequent Obſervations which all Men are forc'd to make of the Weakneſs of their preſent Conſtitution, and the Uncertainty of all that depends on it, theſe may very juſtly diſgrace all ſecular Views, even with ſuch as look no farther than their Graves. For of what Moment can that State be, how much Happineſs ſoever they ſuppoſe in it, which they have reaſon to expect every

every Hour to be for ever remov'd from, or at beſt, to be made incapable of enjoying it? And yet it is very poſſible, ſuch Perſons may conclude from ſuch Thoughts as theſe, That ſince it is all their Dependance, the uncertainty of Life and Health calls on them to enjoy it while they have it in their Power.

But how mean, how unnatural a Concluſion is this, when made by a Chriſtian! One that is aſſured by the expreſs Authority of his Maker, that this Conſtitution, how weak ſoever at preſent, ſhall be ſo reformed, as to become Incorruptible; that this Life, how ſhort ſoever, is the Foundation of Eternity, his Birth-Day, in which he is born to Immortality. What Parent can wiſh that a Child ſhould continue in the Imperfections of its Infancy, in the loweſt Degree of Life, though free from Miſery, and pleas'd in ſuch Capacities as it has? Such a Choice, nay a much worſe, that Chriſtian makes for himſelf, who reſts contented with this World, who thinks himſelf compleat in the Entertainment it affords him, and forgets what he was created to, what Improvements his Nature was form'd capable of, and the Concern God has ſhewn for his making them.

From Chriſt's Offices. Theſe Improvements are preſs'd upon us in the moſt affectionate Manner, by this Revelation, as it inſiſts on the Offices of Chriſt,

Chriſt, and informs us of the Favours procured by him.

If the Son of God reſign'd the Glory of his Father; if he became ſubject to the Infirmities and Afflictions of human Life; if he was made a publick Example of Shame and Sorrow, in a violent and ignominious Death; what Hardſhips can we ſuffer in our Duty, that deſerve to be compar'd with all this? If all this was done out of a generous Concern for our Souls; if all this was ſuffer'd, to deliver us from the Miſeries that our Corruptions lead us into; what Thoughts muſt we have, if we can ſtill expect more Happineſs from thoſe Corruptions, than from our Deliverer himſelf? If the Duties requir'd of us are repreſented grievous, if we are tempted from thence to reſign our ſelves to our own Humours and Paſſions; it ſhould be conſider'd, before 'tis too late, thoſe Duties are only ſuch as our Redeemer himſelf enjoins us; and he certainly muſt be willing his Redemption ſhould ſucceed, and muſt underſtand the beſt Method of ſecuring its Succeſs; and therefore would require nothing impracticable, nor clog his Favour with unneceſſary Grievances: If thoſe Humours and Paſſions have uſually ſettled an Intereſt in the Soul, before it comes to conſider the Duties and the Mercies of Chriſtianity; if this Intereſt does uſually prevail ſo far, as to raiſe ſome Reſentments

ſentments againſt our Duty, and at leaſt divide the Soul againſt her ſelf; yet we are left without Excuſe, whatever Difficulties we meet with, by the gracious Aſſiſtances that are promis'd us from Heaven: If we chuſe to ſubmit to Infernal Deluſions, rather than to the Conduct and Influence of God's Bleſſed Spirit, ſolliciting our Sanctification, and (in Conſequence of that) ſuitable Happineſs; nothing can ſave us from Deſtruction. But that Deſtruction is ſuch, that 'tis the conſtant Care of our merciful Redeemer to prevent it. For this Reaſon, he has undertaken the Spiritual Government of the World: This is the Deſign of his Kingdom; and this ought to repreſent the Spiritual Part of Life of ſuch Importance, that not only our Judgment and Conſcience, but our Affections themſelves, ſhould engage heartily againſt all Encroachments of Vice and Senſuality.

Eternal Judgment.

And if we believe this Revelation, when it repreſents to us the Conſequence of our Behaviour; we can want nothing to raiſe our Concern. They who deſpis'd the Powers of the World to come, the Reſurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment, are given up by St. *Paul*, as paſt all Hopes of Converſion.

Were this Life only concern'd in the Queſtion; did nothing depend on it but a more or leſs manly Converſation, a more or

or leſs rational and conſiſtent Happineſs; it would not be ſtrange, to ſee Men yield to the Corruptions of their Nature, ſordidly contented with the brute Part of Life, and not concern'd for the more noble Uſes that might be made of it. Or were they inform'd only in general of ſome future State, their Uncertainty (with reſpect to the Circumſtances of it) might tempt 'em to Latitude and Partiality in their Concluſions concerning it, and they might find ſome Means to reconcile it with humouring their vicious Inclinations. But when this Future State is declar'd to be uſher'd in with a Solemn Judgment; when 'tis declar'd, that God (the righteous Judge) ſhall expoſe the Secrets of all Hearts; and, according to the Things done in the Body, and the Habits of the Soul contracted in doing them, ſhall determine their Condition in that State; when this Determination is declar'd Abſolute and Eternal, not to be revers'd by any natural or ſupernatural Means, not by the bittereſt Agonies of Repentance, nor by any new Methods of Sanctification or Satisfaction: When Time it ſelf, which wears out all Miſeries here, by exhauſting their Strength, or ſtupifying our Senſe of them, or putting an End to Life; when this ſhall have no Power over the Puniſhments eſtabliſh'd in this Eternal Judgment; when the Terrors of the Lord

are

are thus diſplay'd, what muſt we think of Human Nature, if it will not be perſuaded by them? Is it poſſible to diſguiſe the Duties of Religion, ſo as to make them more terrible than ſuch a State? It ſeems probable, that *Solomon* depended on the Force of this Judgment on the Mind, when he bids his young Man *rejoice in* his *Youth, and walk in the ways of* his *Heart, and in the ſight of* his *Eyes*; for he immediately adds, *But know thou, that for all theſe things God will bring thee to Judgment.* As God gave *Balaam* Leave to go on his impious Deſigns, but at the ſame Time effectually prevented their Execution; ſo *Solomon* may be probably interpreted to give a full Licenſe to Youth to purſue their giddy Humours, but (in the ſame Sentence) to fix them to ſuch a Solemn Conſideration, as could not but reſtrain them. As if he had ſaid, Keep but the Final Judgment of God in your Thoughts, and I dare truſt ye to your ſelves: Remember what depends on your Behaviour; you'll need no other Curb on your Hearts: Be vicious, if ye can. I know that this Principle, if conſtantly attended to, will be too ſtrong for the Heat of Youth; 'twill kill all its Vanities, as faſt as they ſpring up.

Eccleſ. 11. 9.

Faith, when well eſtabliſh'd, a powerful Principle.

Our Temporal and Eternal Intereſt are not in themſelves inconſiſtent: We may enjoy God's Bleſſings, providing we forget not

not the Account we muſt at laſt give. We need not torment our ſelves with uſeleſs Severities; we need not think it a Virtue to be miſerable: Any Man may enjoy the Happineſs of Life according to his Temper and Diſpoſition, providing he remembers that this World is but a ſmall Part of his Concern, and does nothing to his Prejudice in the other. We are not commanded to reſiſt Nature, but only its Corruptions: But whenever our Temporal and Spiritual Happineſs appear to ſtand in Competition, we ſhould remember the Moment and Duration of both Worlds; this would preſerve a juſt Proportion between our Temporal and Spiritual Affections.

The Diſtance of any Thing does generally leſſen its Influence; and what applies immediately to our Senſes, has an Advantage on that Account, by fixing our Thoughts; but the Diſadvantage of Spiritual Things, as being not ſeen, is abundantly over-balanc'd by being Eternal. And as to their Diſtance, tho' 'tis uncertain, yet we all know it can't be great. And Faith, when well eſtabliſh'd, is a very powerful Principle; the Authority of God, on which 'tis founded, is an unconteſtable Security. A Mind that is ſerious and thoughtful, doubts as little of a Future State, (ſo confirm'd to it) as it does of its being at preſent in the Body: It muſt be frequently diverted by the Senſes; it

it muſt make frequent Digreſſions into this World; but when it returns to its Contemplations on the other, every Thing there is as certain, as if it were ſeen. Such Diverſions, if not criminal and vicious, do not weaken, but only interrupt our Faith. This is no more than frequently happens to the Mind, with reſpect to its preſent State. Very intenſe Thinking makes it forget its Relation to Fleſh and Blood; but when it returns to its Attendance on the Senſes, 'tis not capable of doubting whether it be in or out of the Body: In like manner, when Faith is diſengag'd from all the Amuſements of Life, it fixes upon thoſe Things that are inviſible, with a full Aſſurance.

We ſhould often review Particulars.

Nothing can be wanting to give it a ſufficient Force in Life, but our frequently recollecting the Particulars of it: Without this Recollection, tho' we don't become Infidels, we ſhall however ſink into a general, confus'd Aſſent; and if ſo, our Faith muſt loſe its Influence on our Hearts.

As we can find no Subjects more worthy of our Thoughts, ſo the Importance of ſuch will naturally have good Effects, and make deep Impreſſions on ſerious Minds. The Mercy imply'd in God's accepting our faithful Endeavours, tho' far ſhort of our natural Obligations, will appear an irreſiſtible Argument to an ingenuous Heart; 'Twill make

make it aſham'd of all Imperfections in its Duty to ſuch a God, and reſolute againſt all premeditate Diſobedience, all obſtinate Vices.

And the Nature of thoſe Things that are repreſented to the Soul by the Chriſtian Faith, will take it off from all the irregular and miſchievous Affections of this Animal Life, and give it ſuch a Concern for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, as will carry it on to good Advances in ambitious Piety and Virtue. 'Twill ſhow it, how unworthy it is of ſuch a Spirit, a Spirit ſo form'd, ſo related, to proſtitute it ſelf to the Senſuality of Brutes, or the ſpiritual Wickedneſs of Devils. 'Twill engage it to conform, with Gratitude and Reſolution, to God's Meaſures, and *run with Patience the Race that is ſet before it.*

CHAP. X.

An Exhortation to promote ſuch Conformity univerſally; by promoting, as we have Opportunities, Univerſal Virtue.

AS God propoſed the Happineſs of Mankind by their Creation, and has conſtantly purſued it thro' all his Diſpenſations; it muſt be allow'd the Duty of every ſingle Man, to contribute his beſt Endeavours towards the Accompliſhment of this End. As Men conſiſt of Souls and Bodies, their Happineſs is divided accordingly; and as the Providence of God has made a ſuitable Application, Men likewiſe ſhould apply what Means are in their Power to aſſiſt both.

But as the Spiritual State of Human Nature is (beyond all Compariſon) of the greateſt Moment, this Part of Human Happineſs ſhould be proportionably preferr'd. In promoting this, we ſerve God in the moſt

moſt acceptable Manner; adminiſtring to the beſt Part of his Providence, and promoting directly the ultimate End of the whole. When we not only avoid what would be impious or vicious in our ſelves, but take all proper Opportunities to prevent or reform it in others. When we are not contented with diſcharging our own perſonal Duty, but aſſiſt and forward others in every thing that is good. When we conſider Nature in one entire View. When we conſider Mankind as one Perſon, concluding that ſo much Vice prevented or reform'd, is ſo much Miſery prevented or cured; and that ſo much Piety and Virtue, is ſo much Happineſs promoted, whether in our ſelves or others, *i. e.* in one Part or other of that Perſon.

To be unconcerned how much ſoever Vice increaſes, and Virtue decays in all other Parts of Mankind, while we perſuade our ſelves we diſcharge our own particular Obligations, this is a very narrow and deceitful Principle; 'tis like Men's advancing their own preſent Intereſt without regard to the univerſal Good of Society. They may be pleaſed with their preſent Profit, but in all Probability will at length be convinced, that the more generous Rules of Juſtice and Honour, which conſult the Intereſt of Mankind collectively

as one Body, would have been more to their Advantage.

To make our own perſonal Happineſs the final Cauſe of our Piety and Virtue, is by no Means to be condemned as irregular; but we ſhould conſider, we are very imperfect in our perſonal Accompliſhments, if we can live without any Concern for the reſt of Mankind, for the Authority of God, and the Eternal Happineſs of his Creatures. No Part of our private Duty muſt be neglected; but that will be no Hindrance to us if we are inclined to enlarge our Zeal; on the contrary, the more affectionate we are in our perſonal Duty, the more we ſhall be inclined to promote the Glory of God in the univerſal Practice of Virtue. The Glory of God is always to be conſider d, as concluding at laſt in the Happineſs of his Creatures, not in his own perſonal Advantage: 'Tis the Reverence which Rational Creatures have for him; and that Reverence engages them to obey his Authority, and imitate his Perfections; and this Obedience and Imitation leads them to their proper Happineſs: Though the Scriptures therefore frequently mention God's Glory, the Iſſue of all is the ſpiritual Happineſs of Mankind. We are to conſider Piety and Virtue as promoting this, and therefore, as far as it comes within our Power, to be forwarded by us. And on the contrary, we

are to conſider all Impiety and Vice, as deſtroying this, and therefore to be prevented or corrected by us. Whether we inſiſt in our Thoughts on the Glory of God, or on his Deſign in the Creation, or on the Happineſs of Mankind, the Concluſion is ſtill the ſame, and we have the ſame Reaſon to contribute what is in our Power to this ultimate End; and the Truth of this may appear from theſe plain Principles.

1. All Human Souls are of the ſame natural Dignity.

Firſt, All Human Souls are of the ſame natural Dignity, and therefore when impartially conſider'd, muſt be allowed to deſerve an equal Concern for their Welfare; they all wear the ſame Image, the Image of their glorious Creator. The Circumſtances of this imperfect Life are too apt to determine our Thoughts, to make us ſtop ſhort of the moſt important Part of Men's Characters, and overlook the real Moment of Human Nature. We are too apt to forget it in our ſelves, and to place our Happineſs and Perfection in the Satisfactions and Succeſſes of this World; it is therefore leſs to be admir'd, though not leſs unreaſonable, that we ſhould regard others in the ſame unnatural Manner. But the ſpiritual Accompliſhments of Human Nature ſuperſede all the Diſtinctions of Age or Condition, *i. e.* they

may be promoted in all. With Reſpect to this Life, ſmall Portions of External Kindneſs may pleaſe; very trifling Preſents may amuſe Children, and ſmall Charities may be a very ſenſible Relief to Perſons in a very mean Condition; but implanting a Virtue, or correcting a Vice even in a Child, is providing for the Celeſtial Happineſs of an Immortal Spirit; and diſpoſing a Perſon that is hard preſs'd by the Diſadvantages of this Life to provide for his Happineſs in the other, is doing as much good in the Spiritual World, as we can do to any ſingle Soul, how magnificently ſoever provided for in this mortal State.

2. *All are equally regarded by God.*

Secondly, All Human Spirits are equally regarded by their Creator, and therefore our Concern for them without Diſtinction muſt be equally acceptable to him.

They therefore who regard the Wickedneſs of any Part of the World, as a Matter in which they are very little concern'd, as little as in other Men's private Buſineſs; ſuch Perſons forget the Relation, which that Part as well as others bears to God; and the Affection he muſt be ſuppoſed to have for it. Though the Diſturbance which Earthly Parents feel at the Diſobedience and Ruin of their Children can't diſcompoſe God, yet in Conſiſtency with his Deſign in creating Men, we muſt ſuppoſe in him

him a Fatherly Concern for them; and while we forget this Concern, we can hardly retain any Senſe of his Love to Mankind in general, or to our ſelves in particular. The fondeſt Prejudice that can poſſeſs any Man's Heart, can hardly ſingle out himſelf as the ſolitary Object of God's Love; ſuch Perſons therefore, muſt either comprehend others, or live in an ungrateful Inadvertency of God's Love to themſelves; and the Conſequence of this muſt be, either a ſlaviſh Fear, or a thoughtleſs Neglect of him.

If there remains in them any Concern to recommend themſelves to him on any ſound Principle, the ſame Principle will ſhow them, that they recommend themſelves to him effectually by promoting Righteouſneſs in others. Fulfilling all Righteouſneſs is the only thing that can be ſuppoſed, without either Superſtition or Enthuſiaſm, to recommend us to God: And the Reaſon why this recommends us to him is, becauſe it improves our Spirits, and qualifies us for the Happineſs he deſign'd us. And therefore, when we are the Cauſe of the ſame Righteouſneſs, and conſequently of the ſame Improvement in Spirits for which he has the ſame Concern, this muſt be very acceptable to him; and our diſregard of proper Opportunities of that Kind, muſt be conſider'd by him as an unnatural Neglect both of him and them.

3. The Deſign of God equally hinder'd or promoted.

Thirdly, The periſhing of one or another, equally deſtroys the Deſign of God in the Creation, as it introduces equal Degrees of Miſery; and accordingly equal Improvements of one or another, equally promote that Deſign, as they introduce equal Degrees of Happineſs. Becauſe God is equally concern'd for all Human Spirits, therefore the periſhing of any one, is juſt as much deducted from the Good he propoſed by the Creation, as would be deducted by the periſhing of another: Though our own Proſperity in a Future State muſt be particularly dear to us, and the Proſperity of ſome others, for whom ſome affectionate Relation engages us, yet with reſpect to the World in general, and God's gracious Purpoſe in creating it, the Ruin of any other Souls has in it as much evil, and their Salvation as much good. Where equal Degrees of Miſery are introduced, the Good God propoſed is equally defeated; and where equal Degrees of Happineſs are promoted, the Good God propoſed is equally accompliſhed, without any perſonal or real Diſtinction: If we ſpeak properly, we can't pretend to ſerve God in any Thing, but promoting the Happineſs of his Creatures; the End of all our moſt ſolemn Devotions, is to be underſtood to conclude in this: This univer-

univerſal Zeal therefore for his Creatures can't be ſeparated from true Piety.

4. Equal Degrees of Vice, &c. equally contribute to their periſhing, &c.

Fourthly, Equal Degrees of Vice, equally contribute to the periſhing of all; and equal Degrees of Virtue, equally promote their Perfection: They all live under the ſame Divine Authority, are all form'd with the ſame Faculties, and all ſubject to the ſame Habits: The ſame Degrees therefore of Virtue and Vice muſt have the ſame Conſequence in all Human Spirits. We can't ſuppoſe any natural Diſtinction in ſuch Spirits themſelves to prevent this, nor can we imagine any perſonal Fondneſs in God to occaſion any different Treatment. The ſame Actions may contain more or leſs either of Virtue or Vice, according to the State in which Men live, according to the Advantages they enjoy; for the leſs External Cauſe there is to produce the ſame Effect, the more muſt be ſuppoſed of the Internal, the greater the Force of Virtue or Vice in the Soul; but ſtill it muſt be true, that equal Degrees of Virtue or Vice, equally contribute to Men's Perfection or Deſtruction.

If therefore we have any Concern for God's Deſign in the Creation, nothing can countenance our Zeal againſt Vice in one Part of it, and our Satisfaction in it in another. As we muſt be conſiſtent in all Parts of

of Virtue within our ſelves, ſo there is the ſame Reaſon why we ſhould be ſo in all Parts of the Creation: As he that has ſaid, *thou ſhalt not commit adultery*, hath ſaid alſo, *thou ſhalt not kill*; ſo he that made one Part of the Creation, made the other alſo. If therefore we have any Concern for it as God's, that Concern muſt be univerſal.

What Diſtinctions muſt be made in our actual Applications, proceed from our own Imperfections. As God's Arm is never ſhorten'd that he cannot ſave, his Gooodneſs never ſo exhauſted that he cannot relieve; as he is never confin'd in any Meaſure from doing good to all, ſo is his Spirit likewiſe preſent with all; his Grace is ſufficient for all Mankind, and therefore his promoting the Piety and Virtue of one Part of the World, does not in the leaſt take him off from his conſtant Care of others; whereas it muſt us, becauſe our Capacities are finite: And as a Man has a Right to provide, firſt for his own Subſiſtence, and for the Subſiſtence of thoſe of his own Houſe, before he employs his Time or his Subſtance in Behalf of others; ſo it is likewiſe in Internal Good, in promoting Virtue; a Man is not to omit his own perſonal Duty, nor his Religious Concern for thoſe whom Providence has committed to his Care. In both Caſes we an-

anſwer an indiſpenſible Obligation, and do more good by being regular at Home: But this is no Objection to this Precept; which only calls on us to be ſincerely concern'd for Mankind, and to contribute what we can to the Succeſs of God's Creation. And this Precept is founded on theſe plain Truths: 1. All Human Souls are of the ſame Natural Dignity. 2. They are all equally regarded by their Creator. 3. The Periſhing of one or another, equally deſtroys God's Deſign in the Creation; and equal Happineſs, in one or another, equally promotes that Deſign. 4. Equal Degrees of Vice equally contribute to their Periſhing; and equal Degrees of Virtue equally contribute to their Happineſs.

Concluſions from this Obligation,

From this Duty of promoting a Conformity to God's Spiritual Providence univerſally, 'tis eaſy to ſee the Obligation of being careful when we form any ſerious Judgment, when we conclude any Important Opinion relating to Religion: For Intereſt and Paſſion are very apt to pervert us, and lead us into By-Paths out of the way of Truth. As a voracious Covetouſneſs too eaſily perſuades Men to imagine a good Title to impoſe the groſſeſt Injuries; as Wrath and Malice are very poſitive that the moſt moving Objects are unworthy of Compaſſion, and the moſt innocent and in-

1. *Concern for Truth.*

offenſive worthy of the moſt miſchievous Reſentments; ſo, in Matters of greater Importance, ſome treacherous Inclination, or ſome ſpiritual Pride lurking in the Heart, or perhaps mere Infirmity, may (without this Caution) lead us into ſuch Principles, as may have an unhappy Influence both on our ſelves and others.

There is an immoveable Diſtinction between Truth and Falſhood; and in Proportion to the Moment of the Subject, the Conſequence of each is ſo much Good or Evil: In Contempt of this, too many preſs (with an unnatural Zeal) ſuch Principles as undermine all Religion, and conſequently endeavour to do Mankind juſt as much Miſchief, as 'tis poſſible for Religion to do them good.

As to what may be pleaded from Sincerity in ſuch Caſes, that is no Objection againſt this Caution: Where it can be ſuppos'd that all proper Means have been us'd to diſcover the Truth, there this Caution has been obſerv'd: But where a falſe Principle proceeds from Careleſneſs, or from ſome vicious Cauſes influencing the Judgment; the Searcher of Hearts ſees exactly what Degrees of Influence ſuch Cauſes had, and will adjuſt with exact Equity the Degrees of Guilt, and charge us with the Effects, with the Miſchief we have done Mankind.

Ano-

Another Obligation is leſs diſputable; That we ſhould not corrupt others, or betray them (by our Influence or Example) into vicious Practices. *2. Not to corrupt others in Practice.*

This Obligation will eaſily be allow'd in Things unqueſtionably vicious; but the Purity and Exactneſs of the Goſpel extends it farther: That obliges us to abſtain from *all Appearance of Evil.* Tho' we are able to juſtify our Actions to God and our own Conſcience, yet if we can foreſee they will miſ-lead others, (tho' through their own Infirmity) in moſt Caſes we ought to decline ſuch Actions. The Prevention of ſo much Evil in the World, ought to be eſteem'd a ſufficient Compenſation for reſigning our Liberty in that Inſtance. But if the Matter be of ſuch Moment, as to imply any Moral Obligation, we have no Liberty to reſign: We can, in ſuch a Caſe, only endeavour to convince ſuch Perſons of the Unreaſonableneſs of their Concluſion, how far they are from being juſtify'd by our Example. If ſuch Endeavours prove fruitleſs, we have diſcharg'd our own Souls; and we muſt perform our own perſonal Duty, tho' others make an ill Uſe of our Conduct.

But where our Practice is really vicious, the Influence it has on others will certainly be imputed to us: The Miſchief it does

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in the World, muſt be accounted for as Part of our Guilt. That Influence, and the Miſchief caus'd by it, is (in many Caſes) not ſubject to Human Obſervation; but, as it is not to be queſtion'd but that vicious Examples carry in them very ſtrong Infection, ſo God ſees diſtinctly how it is communicated. Were this ſeriouſly conſider'd, it might ſtrike a Terror on the ſpurious Bravery of Prophaneneſs and Blaſphemy, bidding Defiance to the Powers of Heaven, and dictating to the Hearers a Contempt of all Religion, as Superſtition; and an inſolent Irreverence towards God, as a manly Magnanimity. It might likewiſe fright Men from ſuch Exceſſes as make Human Nature ridiculous, and exhibit thereby a Publick Spectacle of Wickedneſs.

Theſe, beſides all other Miſchiefs that may be expected, and often happen from them, countenance ſuch Abuſes as ruin the Natural Perfections both of Mind and Body, and harden ſuch as obſerve them againſt that Authority, that forbids them, under the greateſt Terrors. In ſhort; all Vices that ſuppoſe Company, carry with them ſo much the more extenſive Deſtruction. The Souls corrupted by them, may not be reform'd, tho' we ſhould afterwards be reform'd our ſelves, and have Honeſty

and

and Zeal enough to endeavour their Reformation. And what a Load muſt it be upon our Hearts! How grievous muſt it be to us, to reflect on thoſe guilty Days, in which we perſuaded them to that Iniquity, which we ſtill ſee working in them!

Another Obligation, to be concluded from this Duty, is a cautious Reſervedneſs with reſpect to bad Characters. To diſplay ſuch Characters, (whether unjuſtly, or unneceſſarily only) is recommending the Intereſt of Vice; 'tis giving to it ſo much additional Authority. And according to the Station of the Perſons expos'd, this will do more or leſs Miſchief. Men are uſually ſuppos'd, according to their Advantages in the World, and the Obligations ariſing from thoſe Advantages, to be a Rule for the Judgment and Practice of others; but eſpecially, where it is agreeable to their own Inclinations: If they don't conclude the Lawfulneſs of their Vices, they at leaſt ſhake off the Reſtraint of Shame. Such Characters are generally taken as good Authorities for Vice. Men that are viciouſly inclin'd, will not chuſe to examine ſcrupulouſly into the Merits of their Cauſe, the Propriety of their Concluſion: They go no farther than this implicit

3. *Not to diſplay Bad Characters.*

plicit Suppoſition, That what is ſo freely done by Men ſo much wiſer, or better, or greater than themſelves, need not be ſcrupled by them. They ſeem to conclude it a Kind of Pride, or Arrogance, not to be as Vicious as their Betters.

And where there is nothing extraordinary in the Perſon of whom ſuch a Character is given, nothing more than being one of Mankind, or (at moſt) a profeſs'd Chriſtian; even in this Caſe, ſome Encouragement is taken merely from Numbers: They keep up the Spirit of Vice; they remove, or prevent, the Influence both of Fear and Shame. Such Arguments, either from Perſons or Numbers, are indeed in themſelves very weak, but (in Conjunction with the Corruptions of Human Nature) they are ſtrong enough to prevail on too many.

It were therefore to be wiſh'd, that the Iniquities of Men might never be produc'd into publick View, but with a ſufficient Antidote againſt their Infection; *i. e.* in order to their Puniſhment, or together with it. Next to baniſhing Vice out of the World, it is moſt deſirable to confine it to Obſcurity, as to a dark Dungeon.

4. All ſhould employ their Influence to this End.

The Laſt Concluſion I ſhall make, from this Univerſal Concern for the Spiritual Good

Good of Mankind, is this; That all Perſons, in whatever Character, ought to perform their Duty for the Regulation of the World, to reform Diſorders, and improve Human Life.

All Degrees of Influence and Power are to be apply'd to this End: All private Perſons ought to embrace any Opportunity in Common Life; and Parents eſpecially ſhould conſider themſelves, as inveſted with a great Truſt in this Way of doing good.

Some Perſons have ſo much Influence in the World, they have ſuch an Extenſive Truſt, that they are capable of doing much Good, or much Evil, without being immediately concern'd in it, by the Hands, Heads and Hearts that they employ. When ſuch a Truſt is religiouſly conſider'd, and conſcientiouſly diſcharg'd, ſuch Perſons are very great Benefactors to Mankind. But beſides this, the immediate Exerciſe of Power may frequently make good Impreſſions; and the Reflections of Mens own Minds may afterwards continue them, and proceed to very Happy Improvements. They who have ſuffer'd for any vicious Extravagance, may be made ſenſible of it, and forſake it: But if no more be accompliſh'd by it, but this, that the Publick Scandal and Corruption is prevented; this

is a good Uſe of Power. Where no Virtue can be fix'd, where no poſitive Good can be done, 'tis no ſmall Matter to prevent Vice, and thereby to ſtop ſo much Evil.

Admoniſhing others. The loweſt Degree of doing good of this Kind, contributing to the ultimate End of Life, is, when private Perſons (by ſome ſeaſonable Admonitions) put others upon ſome Good, which they would not otherwiſe have thought on; or divert them from ſome Evil, which they would otherwiſe have committed. Admonition and Reproof are, indeed, ſubject to many Diſadvantages, which weaken the Reaſon and Importance they carry with them: They are not apply'd with any Probability of Succeſs, without great Caution: The Application of them is ſubject to many Rules; ſome General, taken from their own Nature; others more Particular, ariſing from the Circumſtances of the Perſons concern'd. I ſhall here mention but Two; the one, to make it appear, by the Manner of applying them, that our Reaſon for them is a ſincere Concern for the Perſon, and for Good depending: the other, not to go too much out of our Way, or too much out of our Character.

Theſe Reſtrictions will not hinder Men from having many Opportunities that may be

be ſucceſsful. But Parents have conſtant Opportunities, and are not diſcouraged or reſtrained by the ſame Difficulties in applying them. As they have peculiar Obligations of this Kind, ſo have they equal Advantages; they have no Prejudices, no falſe Impreſſions at firſt to overcome; they have the Aſſiſtance of a natural and habitual Love, Reverence and Submiſſion; and they have likewiſe the Support of Hope and Fear, all the future Intereſt of Life. *Care of Children.*

The Minds of Children are ready to receive any Impreſſions, and hard is their Lot when they have ſuch Parents as make vicious ones, or at beſt expoſe them by a careleſs Education to ſuch as may happen, which in ſuch a World is not much better. It had the Appearance of Tenderneſs in the midſt of the Heathen Barbarity, that they would not murder them with their own Hands, but to expoſe them as they did, fell very little ſhort of it.

Such young Minds, before they come to be capable of Inſtruction or Moral Improvements, have uſually contracted ſuch Regard for thoſe Hands that ſuſtain and feed them, thoſe Mouths that have diverted and endear'd them, that whatever comes from them, comes with great Advantage; ſuch as ought not to be loſt; ſuch as may lay up in them great Treaſures of future Good,

Good, and make them great Bleſſings to many yet unborn.

In ſhort, *all Men ſhould be conſtant and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, foraſmuch as they know, their Labour is not vain in him.* All ſhould join in praiſing the Father, the Son, and the Bleſſed Spirit, for the gracious Part each has ſuſtained in Purſuance of their Everlaſting Happineſs.

Keep, we beſeech thee, O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual Mercy; and becauſe the Frailty of Man cannot but fall without thee, keep us ever by thy Help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our Salvation through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

FINIS.